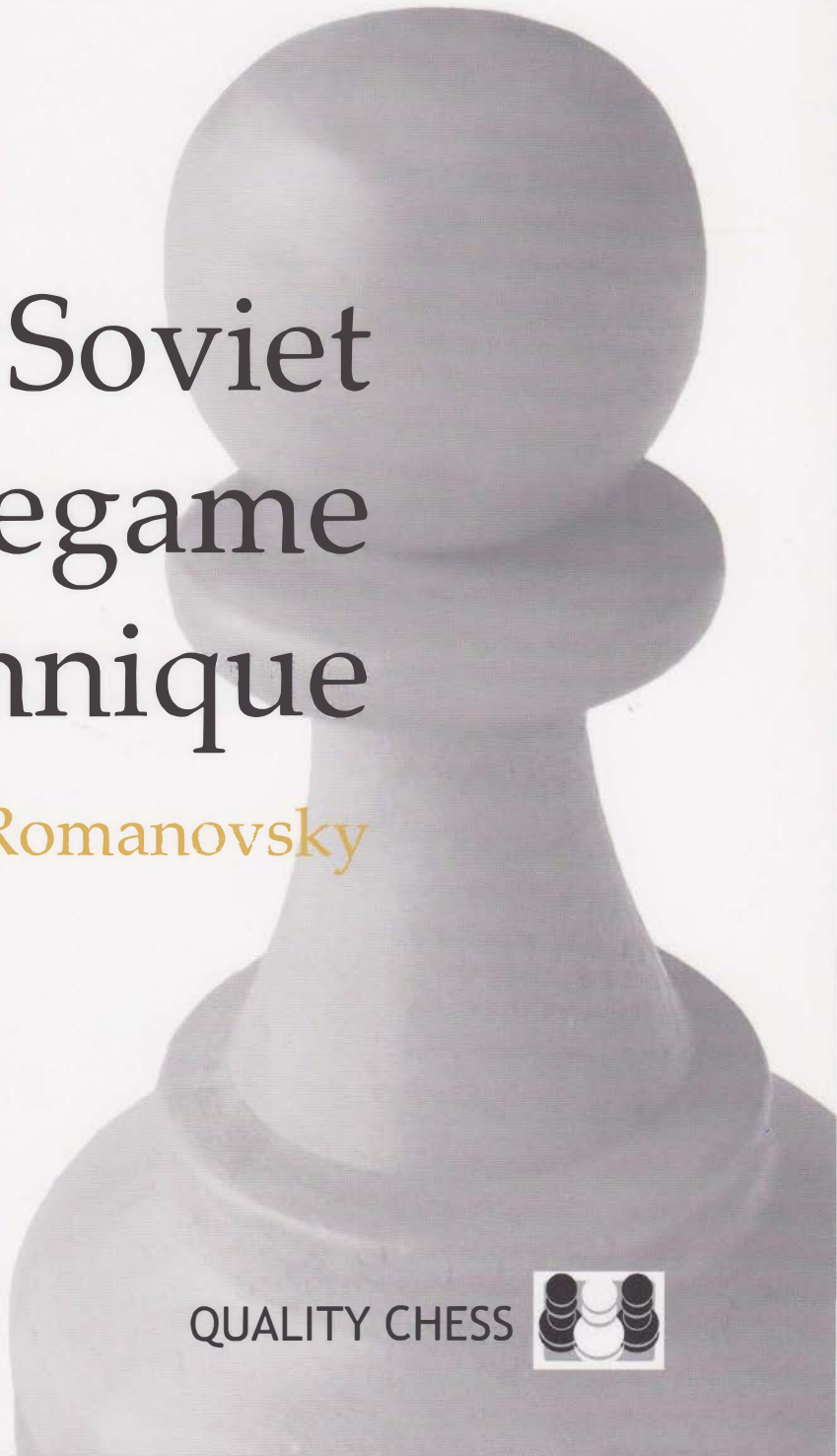
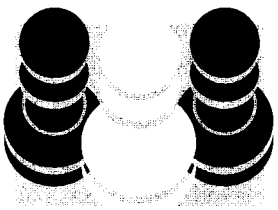
Chess Classics



Soviet Middlegame Technique

by Peter Romanovsky

QUALITY CHESS

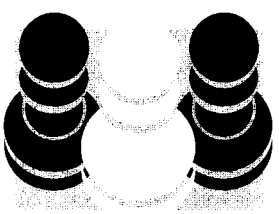


Chess Classics

Soviet Middlegame Technique

By

Peter Romanovsky



Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk

First English edition 2013 by Quality Chess UK Ltd

Copyright © 2010, 2013 Peter Romanovsky, Ilya Odessky

Soviet Middlegame Technique

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

Paperback ISBN 978-1-907982-48-4
Hardcover ISBN 978-1-907982-49-1

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Quality Chess UK Ltd,
20 Balvie Road, Milngavie, Glasgow G62 7TA, United Kingdom
Phone +44 141 333 9588
e-mail: info@qualitychess.co.uk
website: www.qualitychess.co.uk

Distributed in North America by Globe Pequot Press,
P.O. Box 480, 246 Goose Lane, Guilford, CT 06437-0480, US
www.globepequot.com

Distributed in Rest of the World by Quality Chess UK Ltd through
Sunrise Handicrafts, ul. Skromna 3, 20-704 Lublin, Poland

Translation from Russian by John Sugden
Typeset by Jacob Aagaard
Proofreading by Andrew Greet & John Shaw
Edited and compiled by Ilya Odessky
Editing of English edition by Colin McNab
Cover design by Carole Dunlop and Vjatseslav Tsekatovski
Printed in Estonia by Tallinna Raamatutrükikoja LLC

Foreword by the UK Publisher

Many of the classics of Soviet chess literature have struggled to see the light of day, but none more so than *Soviet Middlegame Technique* by Peter Romanovsky. The original version of this famous guide to the middlegame was published in 1929 when Romanovsky was Soviet Champion. Romanovsky later decided to update and improve his work. As he finished his work in 1942, World War II was underway and Romanovsky was trapped in the notorious siege of Leningrad. The author barely survived and his manuscript was lost.

Romanovsky was undeterred and finally recreated his improved book in 1960. His writing was later translated into English and published in two titles – one on Planning and the other on Combinations. In this fresh translation we have included both works to create the ultimate version of a classic of Soviet chess literature.

As with our previous Soviet classics, the original editing in Russian was done by IM Ilya Odessky, before John Sugden skilfully translated the work into English, then the editors of Quality Chess made our contribution. Modern players and computers can of course improve on some of the original analysis, so we have corrected various tactical oversights. However, the true value of Romanovsky was always based on his insightful words and that remains the case today.

Peter Romanovsky had to fight hard to get his work published, so we hope the readers will appreciate this classic text from the Soviet chess school.

John Shaw and Jacob Aagaard
Glasgow, February 2013

Contents

Foreword by the UK Publisher 3
Key to symbols used & Bibliography 6

PART ONE: PLANNING 7

Introduction 7
(A) General System 8
(i) Basic concepts 8
(ii) Concrete scheme 10
(iii) Dynamics 18
(iv) Harmony 25
(B) Squares 35
(i) Weak point 35
(ii) The "permanent" knight 37
(iii) Weak squares on the sixth (third) rank 42
(iv) A few conclusions 49
(C) Open Lines 50

1 Two Wins by Wilhelm Steinitz – Their Creative and Technical Substance 58
2 Stages in a Plan – Square and File as Targets of the Plan – The Preparatory Stage – The Stage of Concrete Action – Exploitation of Gains 66
3 Play on the a-File 83
4 The Centre – Its Strategic Significance – Knights on e5 and d5 (e4 and d4) The Pawn Centre – Attacking with the Centre Pawns – Hanging Pawns 95
5 More about Active Pawn Play – The Pawn Wedge and How to React to It The "Nail" Pawn – The Phalanx of e- and f-pawns – The Pawn Storm 137
6 Battle of the Major Pieces 169
7 Manoeuvring – The Initiative 187
8 The Two Bishops 209

PART TWO: COMBINATION 221

9 What is a Combination? 221
10 The Elements of Combination – Motif and Theme 223
11 The Aesthetics of Combination: General Concepts 228
12 Idea and Technique of an "Incarcerated King" Combination 232
13 More about Aesthetics – Pseudo-Sacrifice – Queen Sacrifice 236
14 On the Theory of Combination – Typical Ideas 248
15 Modern History of Combinations – The Immortal Game
Masterpieces from the End of the 19th Century 267
16 Double Attack – Attacks on Pieces by Pawns 291
17 Positional Weakness as a Combinative Motif
Combinations Invited by Weaknesses in the Castled Position
Sacrifice of Bishop for Pawn on g3, h3, g6, h6 313
18 Combinative Attack with Two Bishops
Harmonious Action of Rooks on the Second and Seventh Ranks
Rook Sacrifice on g7 333
19 Harmonious Action of Rook and Bishop
The Theme of Trapping a Piece 361
20 The Interference Device in Various Combinative Schemes 380
21 How Players Think During the Game 389

Index of Names 413

Key to symbols used

⩲	White is slightly better
⩱	Black is slightly better
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+–	White has a decisive advantage
–+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
⯹	with compensation
⇄	with counterplay
∞	unclear

?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

Introduction

The middlegame is the name given to the central phase of a game of chess. It is characterized by a relatively large quantity of forces in action on both opposing sides. Other characteristics of this segment of the game are the passive situation of the kings and the constant threats arising in the parts of the battlefield where the kings are located. Threats that arise in succession and are linked by a single purpose constitute an attack, which in the middlegame often has the king position as its objective. In this, the middlegame differs from the endgame or concluding phase of the play – where the quantity of forces in action is relatively small, where attacks on the king are rare, and where, finally, the kings assume an active role. Indeed this sudden employment of the kings in contrast to their previous role is the chief sign of the distinction between the endgame phase and the middlegame.

It goes without saying that the limited amount of forces in action in the endgame noticeably narrows the circle of creative ideas – the diversity of which, conversely, is a distinguishing feature of the middlegame. The theory of many endgames supplies definitive conclusions, and in the endgame the significance of technique – that is, the application of theoretical laws and principles to practical play – greatly increases. It is the middlegame struggle that most fully and dramatically brings out the creative substance of the art of chess. The paramount creative factor in the chess struggle – combination – manifests itself chiefly in the central phase. The middlegame gives the strongest stimulus to a chess player's imagination and inventive thought; it tends to give the most distinct expression both to his purely human traits (temperament, boldness, ingenuity and so forth) and to the peculiarities of his chess style – the views on the game, the current of ideas or school, to which he subscribes. It is no accident that the materials of the middlegame, if viewed in a historical perspective, enable us to trace the evolution of chess ideas with a high degree of precision.

Apart from the middlegame and endgame, there is the opening – the initial stage of the game, where theory deals with questions about the purposeful development of the pieces. At the start of the opening stage, during the first 3-5 moves, the quantity of forces on the board is at its maximum, and in most cases it remains very substantial up to the very moment when the middlegame commences. In this respect, the character of the play in the opening and middlegame stages is similar. There is also, however, a crucial difference: the ideas of the opening are basically centred on achieving full mobilization, whereas the plans in the middlegame arise from the possibility of actions with pieces already mobilized – which immeasurably widens the creative horizon of the ideas.

Of course, between opening and middlegame there is bound to be a very close link. In the opening you should not simply be mobilizing your pieces but arranging them in such a way that they can play the role destined for them in the initial stage of the middlegame. In other words, the middlegame plans should logically continue the opening line of play, merging with it into a single systematic project.

(A) General System

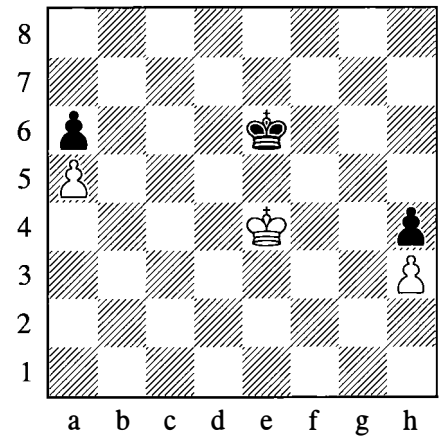
(i) Basic concepts

It may be said without exaggeration that to form a plan of action and translate it into reality constitutes the chief task within the processes of the chess struggle.

A skilfully devised and purposefully executed plan amounts to a sure guarantee of success.

Skilfully devising a plan means, in the first place, correctly identifying the aims which the player's thoughts should be geared to achieving. The task is far from simple, and many difficulties arise along the way to resolving it. But then, correctly identifying a goal is only one half the of matter. Formulating a plan is not enough – you still have to solve the no-less-serious problem of implementing it. Of course, when envisaging the goal, paths to achieving it need to be taken into account at the same time. More than that – the choice of the goal itself must in some measure be determined by the feasibility of attaining it. The feasibility, however, has to be assessed in a relative sense, because one player's pursuit of his goal comes up against the will and mind of his opponent. It may happen that your opponent's counteraction forces you to change your plan and even go over to defence. Yet in spite of the relative constraint that we have mentioned, you cannot conduct the game without forming a plan and directing your actions in accordance with it.

In order to form an impression of a plan from very simple examples, let us consider two elementary positions from the realm of the endgame.



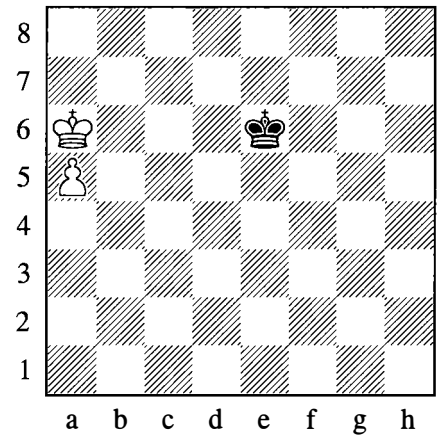
It is White to move. His position is better, since he can easily win the pawn on h4. Is this sufficient for victory? It is, but only on condition that White correctly conceives his scheme and the means to implement it. His plan should consist of the following. As the first stage, he wins the h4-pawn. As the second stage, the king heads for the a6-pawn and picks up this one too, utilizing the fact that the enemy king is diverted from the queenside by White's passed pawn on the h-file. Finally, White queens his a-pawn and checkmates the opponent's lone king.

Therefore:

1.♔f4

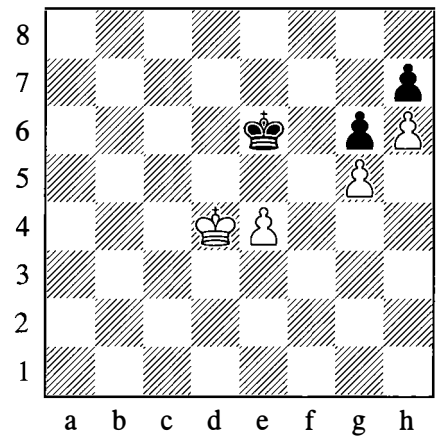
There can be two plans of defence for Black. One is to head for the a5-pawn, capture it, and try to queen his own passed pawn on the a-file. The other is to attack the white pawn on the kingside at the moment when White's king sets off for the queenside towards the a6-pawn. The former plan can be discarded at once, as a simple count indicates that the white pawn reaches h8 much sooner than the black one reaches a1. (White needs eight moves – ♔g4, ♔xh4, ♔g5, h4-h5-h6-h7-h8=♕ – while Black needs ten: ♔d5, ♔c4, ♔b5, ♔xa5, ♔b4 and five pawn moves.) There remains the second plan.

1...♔f6 2.♔g4 ♔g6 3.♔xh4 ♔h6 4.♔g4 ♔g6 5.♔f4 ♔h5 6.♔e4 ♔h4 7.♔d5 ♔xh3 8.♔c5 ♔g4 9.♔b6 ♔f5 10.♔xa6 ♔e6



11.♔b7

And the pawn reaches its promotion square unhindered.



In this example, White's situation looks even more favourable. He is already a passed pawn to the good, and his plan seems obvious: at the cost of this passed pawn, he penetrates with his king to g7 in order to destroy the h7-pawn. However, endgame theory is familiar with positions of this type in which the weaker side gains a draw by stalemating the hostile king. It turns out that this is just one such position.

1.e5 ♔e7 2.♔d5 ♔d7 3.e6† ♔e8 4.♔e5 ♔e7

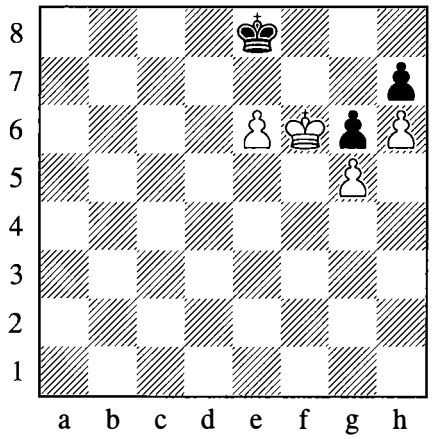
Black tries not to let the white king reach f6, but White has a possible way to achieve this.

5.♔d5 ♔e8 6.♔d4 ♔d8 7.♔e4 ♔e8 8.♔d5 ♔e7

If 8...♔d8 then 9.♔d6, and the e-pawn queens.

9.♔e5 ♔e8 10.♔f6

The first part of the plan – penetration with the king to f6 – is accomplished



10...♔f8 11.e7† ♔e8 12.♔g7

It looks as if the second task of the plan is also solved, but...

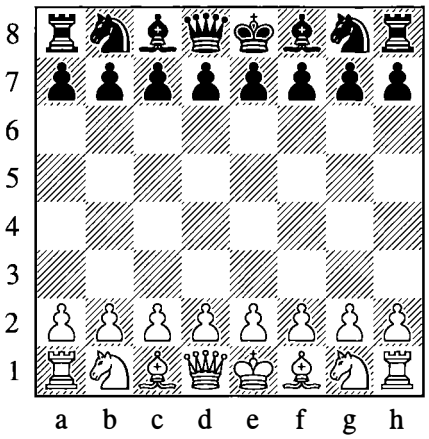
12...♔xe7 13.♔xh7 ♔f7 14.♔h8 ♔f8 15.h7 ♔f7 stalemate

White failed to achieve his aim thanks to the astute resistance of his opponent, whose plan featured an interesting drawing resource.

In positions characteristic of the middlegame, where substantial forces are engaged, the essence of a plan remains the same, but the play as a whole is of course immeasurably more complex. The defending side has far greater possibilities available for resistance, and the attacker himself will be faced with choosing

between several aims and various means of attaining them. The ability to choose the best and surest of them generally stems from the accuracy of his assessment of the position.

Let us ponder the starting position of the game.



Many inexperienced amateurs suppose that in the starting position you cannot form a plan of action that is even comparatively realistic, given that the position is highly complex and that whatever move White makes, Black can answer it in a whole variety of ways. In a certain measure, of course, this view is justified. Nevertheless in our time, when the creative ideas of the chess art are vigorously flourishing – resulting in the constant enrichment of chess theory – we know that the indeterminate quality of the starting position is only apparent. After the first, second and third moves we are already dealing with variations that determine certain aims, not purely for the realm of the opening but for the subsequent struggle as a whole. In selecting his first move, whether 1.c4, 1.d4, 1.♘f3 or 1.e4, a modern player is already envisaging some positions he would like to reach in the opening – positions which in turn, in his view, will be the starting point for generating an overall strategic plan to be executed basically in the middlegame.

The process of the struggle according to a plan can be divided into three stages:

(1) Preparation for the general battle.
(2) The fight for an advantage.
(3) The exploitation of that advantage.

Success in the first stage is decided to a considerable extent in the opening. The chief and most complex stage is undoubtedly the second. The third stage is that of reckoning up.

(ii) Concrete scheme

The most purposeful and well-grounded plans, and therefore the ones with the most chances of successful execution, are those with a concrete scheme as their basis.

By a concrete scheme we mean an idea in a chess player's mind which embraces both a set of aims deduced from the objective positional situation, and the means to attaining them envisaged in the maximum possible detail.

If an aim is wrongly chosen or the means to its attainment are wrapped in an obscure haze, then the scheme lacks concreteness and is almost certainly doomed to failure. It is not without reason that chess literature in such cases speaks of "chasing after phantoms".

Concrete strategic schemes must be distinguished from tactical ones.

Strategy is a plan taken as a whole; the separate operations that lead to its fulfilment constitute tactics. If a strategic plan is imagined figuratively as a chain, tactical schemes are the links that comprise it. The tactical schemes are means to executing the strategic one.

A concrete strategic scheme represents the principal task at a specific stage of the struggle. It is based on the current positional circumstances and develops out of them, allowing a player to map out a path to the solution of the problem before him.

A plan wrongly formulated, or moves that run counter to the game plan, should be classed

as strategic errors. A tactical error is a mistake in calculation, a failure to see the opponent's reply – anything that makes it more difficult or wholly impossible to carry out the concrete strategic design.

In the process of the struggle you sometimes reach positions where it is hard to identify a realistic goal and hence to draw up a concrete scheme. In these cases you have to be content with judgements of a general nature; your specific thoughts, on the whole, will be directed to forestalling your opponent's threats – until suitable targets for a plan come to light, and the struggle enters the realm of concrete projects. Sometimes in positions that are closed by the pawn chains, the play necessarily takes the form of more or less protracted manoeuvres with the pieces.

In such cases a probing mode of action, which perhaps can hardly even be called a plan at all, comes on the agenda. Its goal is very vague or wholly non-existent; the moves either take on a prevaricating character or else have nothing but narrowly tactical motives.

In these conditions, when a player's thought has no clear-cut objects and consequently there can be no concrete schemes, the play often proceeds in a state of equilibrium and culminates in a draw. From the creative viewpoint, games on these lines are of little interest; in point of ideas, they are colourless.

In the light of these remarks, let us examine the element of planning and the concrete schemes in the following games.

K. Klaman – V. Smyslov

Queen's Pawn Opening
15th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1947

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 b6

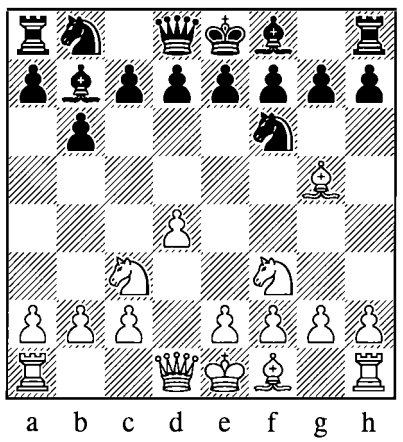
This move is the starting point of a broad game plan which involves exerting strong pressure with pieces against the central squares d5 and e4. If White doesn't offer suitable resistance, Black will occupy e4 with a knight and then fortify this outpost with ...f5. Such a set-up, which sometimes occurs in the Dutch Defence, promises Black good chances of attacking on the kingside.

From playing a modest move with a queenside pawn in the opening, to mating the opponent's king – such is the genuine scope of a specific creative idea!

3.♘c3

White's plan is to organize pressure of his own against the e4-square and to prepare the move e2-e4. In chess theory, pawns standing side by side on e4 and d4 are termed a pawn centre. In due course we shall give special attention to this important positional factor. For the moment we should note that the pawn centre is one of the most powerful weapons in the fight for the central squares, and in most cases can be regarded as a positional gain. Hence the threat to set up a pawn centre usually gives rise to appropriate counter-measures from the other side.

3...♗b7 4.♗g5



Already on move 4, a difficult and tense moment has arrived. White is ready to carry out his threat (♗xf6 and e2-e4).

Black is in a dilemma as to whether to prevent this, and by what means. A good way of fighting against White's pawn centre would be to attack his central pawn at once, in this case by 4...c5. If White answers this by exchanging pawns or playing 5.e3, Black's problem is solved. However White also has another possibility available – 5.d5, or first 5.♗xf6 gxf6 (or 5...exf6) and then 6.d5, severely cramping the enemy's queenside pieces. Evidently this is what led Black to think that the invasion of e4 by the white king's pawn had to be mechanically barred.

4...d5?

Although this move prevents the formation of a pawn centre, it nonetheless constitutes a serious strategic error. The point is that it goes against the line of action that Black planned with his second and third moves. His bishop on b7, and his queenside forces in general, are deprived of their activity. Moreover Black is allowing the enemy knight to invade on e5, since he is denying himself the option of ...d6 to control that square.

White now has a concrete plan at his disposal for an almost irresistible attack against his opponent's castled position. The next phase of the game shows how easily he executes this plan.

5.e3 e6 6.♘e5 ♗e7 7.♗b5† c6 8.♗d3 c5 9.0–0

Black meets 9.♗b5† with 9...♔f8, when in view of the threatened ...c4 the white bishop will be in danger.

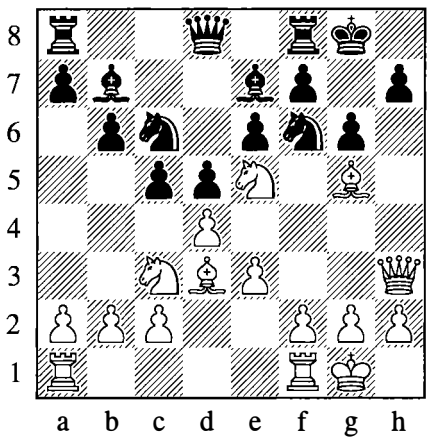
9...0–0?

Straight into White's attack! He should have played 9...a6, so as to guard the b5-square and then try to exchange off his opponent's centralized knight with ...♘bd7 or ...♘c6. Black has not formed a concrete plan of defence but is making routine moves, evidently not sensing the full danger of his position.

10.♕f3 ♘c6? 11.♕h3 g6?

Finally a tactical oversight too, albeit in a difficult situation.

After the correct 11...♘xe5 12.dxe5 ♘e4 13.♗xe4 dxe4 14.♖ad1 ♕e8 White's advantage is not in doubt, but his victory is still a long way off.



12.♗a6!

A sharp-witted and unexpected idea, leading to the win of the exchange.

12...♕c8

12...♗xa6 makes no difference: 13.♘xc6 ♕e8 14.♘xe7† ♕xe7 15.♕h4 ♔g7 16.♗h6†

13.♘xc6 ♕xc6 14.♗xb7 ♕xb7 15.♕h4 ♔g7 16.♗h6†

It must, however, be emphasized that White's idea is founded on the weakening of Black's kingside resulting from ...g6, so in itself it is perfectly logical. We may say it forms the culmination of White's entire plan.

That said, in the actual game White didn't go in for the win of the exchange but contented himself with a draw after 16...♔g8 17.♗g5 ♔g7 etc.

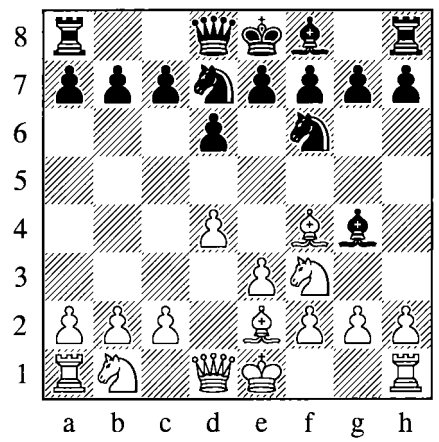
M. Yudovich – K. Klaman

Queen's Pawn Opening
15th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1947

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6

The immediate aim of this opening system lies in the advance ...e5, supported by Black's knight on d7, his bishop on g7 and sometimes also a rook on e8.

3.♗f4 ♗g4 4.e3 ♘bd7 5.♗e2



5...e6?

Black's misfortunes begin with this move. He unexpectedly refrains from carrying out his plan, which (after for instance 5...♗xf3 6.♗xf3 e5 7.♗g5 c6, followed by ♗e7 and 0–0) would secure him a perfectly satisfactory position. Instead he switches to pure "trench warfare" and waiting tactics. Meanwhile White of course mobilizes his whole army, preparing a general offensive in the centre.

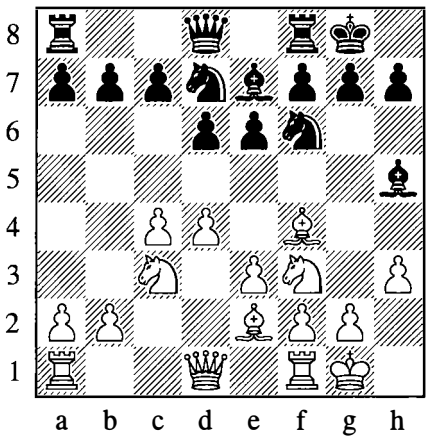
6.h3 ♗h5

Even now he should have reverted to the indicated plan. The bishop's retreat is completely aimless.

7.0–0 ♗e7 8.c4 0–0

Black has landed in a cramped position. Most of his pieces – both rooks, the queen, the bishop on h5 – have no good prospects for activity. Nevertheless, if he had based his subsequent play on a concrete scheme, it wouldn't have been easy for his opponent to execute his plan of attack.

9.♘c3



9...♘e8?

This retreat lacks any concrete aim, and worsens the placing of Black's pieces still further. Without the advance ...e5, Black cannot solve the problems that face him. His play from here on ought to be devoted to preparing this pawn move.

Black can play 9...♖e8 (intending ...♗f8 next). White may then reply 10.♕d2, hoping for 10...♗f8 11.♖ad1 e5 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘xe5! ♘xe5 14.♕xd8 ♖axd8 15.♖xd8 ♖xd8 16.♗xh5 ♘xh5 17.♗xe5 with the advantage. However, the white queen being momentarily undefended allows Black to immediately advance 10...e5, as 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♘xe5?? ♘xe5 13.♕xd8 ♗xd8 would cost White a piece.

Another continuation is 9...♗xf3 10.♗xf3 e5 11.♗h2 c6, and only then ...♖e8 and ...♗f8, which would ensure Black good possibilities of resistance.

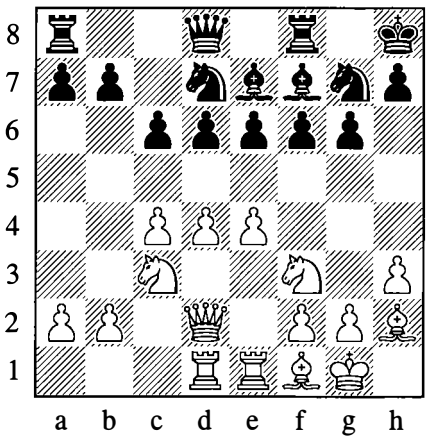
10.♕d2 f6 11.♖ad1 ♗f7

Black could play 11...e5 at this point, when White should simply withdraw his bishop, as the attempt to refute it tactically with 12.dxe5 fxe5 13.♘xe5? backfires after 13...♗xe2 14.♕d5† ♔h8 15.♘xd7 ♖xf4 16.exf4 ♗xd1 17.♖xd1 ♕xd7.

12.♗h2 c6 13.e4 ♔h8?

Both now and on the next two moves, ...e5 was the right course. The well-fortified pawn in the centre would enable Black to construct a plan of defence. Instead he passively awaits his opponent's attack; it is not long coming.

14.♖fe1 g6? 15.♗f1 ♘g7?



16.c5!

The beginning of a concrete plan which has a queenside pawn storm as its aim.

16...d5

Instead 16...♕c7 is bad in view of 17.cxd6 ♗xd6 18.e5! winning a piece by force.

17.exd5 exd5 18.b4

White's bishop on h2 is sweeping the whole board, particularly the key queenside squares c7 and b8. With this bishop's support, White's pawn offensive proves extremely menacing, especially since the enemy pieces are constricted in their movements as before.

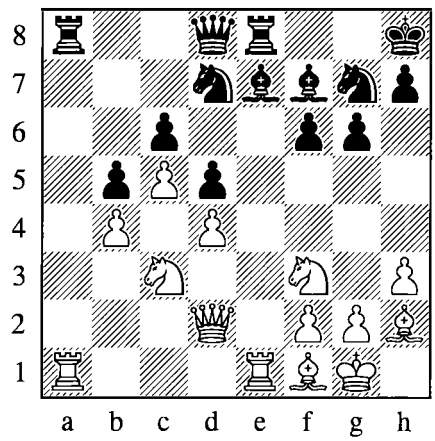
18...b5

Otherwise after b4-b5 White will open the b-file to his advantage.

19.a4

White's plan is clear and specific – to open the a-file, occupy it with his major pieces and break into his opponent's camp.

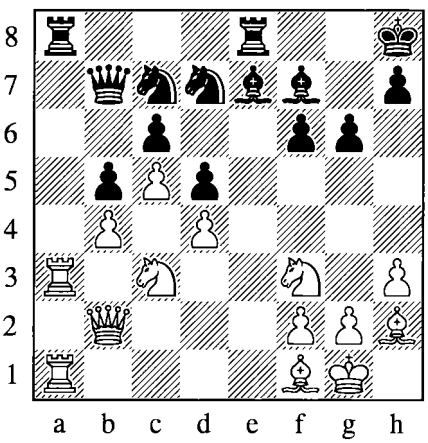
19...a6 20.axb5 axb5 21.♖a1 ♖e8



22.♖a2

A typical tactical device for occupying an open file. The conditions for it are supplied by White's control of greater space on the queenside.

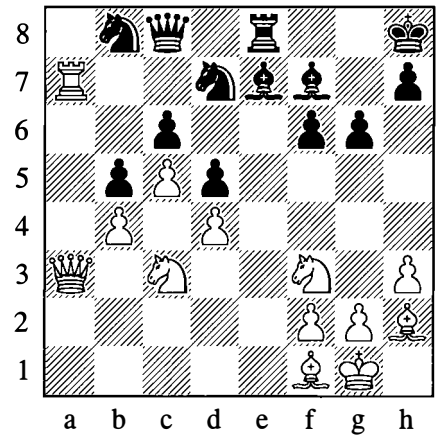
22...♕c8 23.♖ea1 ♕b7 24.♕b2 ♘e6 25.♖a3 ♘c7



26.♖a5! ♖xa5

White was threatening to win a piece (with ♗xc7), so the exchange is forced.

27.♖xa5 ♘a6 28.♕a3 ♘ab8 29.♖a7 ♕c8



The aim is achieved. The next stage – that of exploiting White's advantage – now begins.

30.♘xb5

This sacrifice is not the only path to victory; 30.♖c7 ♕d8 31.♕a7 is also sufficient.

30...cxb5 31.♗xb5 ♔g7 32.♗xb8 ♘xb8 33.♗xe8 ♕xe8 34.b5 ♗f8 35.♕e3 ♕c8 36.♕f4

White threatens ♘e5 as well as ♖a8 or ♕c7. Planless play has received just retribution.

1–0

I. Bondarevsky – M. Botvinnik

Queen's Gambit, Slav Defence
USSR Absolute Championship,
Leningrad/Moscow 1941

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c6

Already on move 2, we can see the play starting to be planned. On 3.c4, Black can capture the pawn and subsequently defend his gain with ...b5; while 3.♗f4 allows him to put pressure on the weakened b2-point by means of ...♕b6.

3.e3

Usually one of the tasks White sets himself in the opening is to give his opponent problems in developing his pieces. In particular, in many lines of the Queen's Gambit Black has to work quite hard to unravel his forces on the queenside.

In the present game, however, White not only shows no ambition to constrain his opponent, he restricts the actions of his *own* queenside pieces. This allows Black to implement a purposeful game plan without any trouble.

White's plan is extremely modest: he is going to play c2-c4, ♘c3, ♗e2 (or ♗d3), 0–0, b2-b3 and ♗b2, and afterwards he will see what can be extracted from such a set-up. In this way he voluntarily relinquishes the initiative in the opening, which cannot be recommended. After either 3.c4 or 3.♗f4, Black could not feel free from cares as he does in the game.

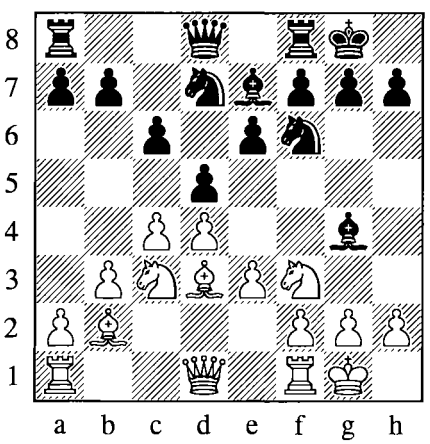
3...♗g4 4.c4 e6 5.♘c3

On 5.♕b3 Black has 5...♕b6, after which it's hard for White to think up an active concrete plan.

5...♘d7 6.♗d3

After three more moves, this bishop will be withdrawn to e2. If (as appears to be the case) White is not planning e3-e4, his bishop move must be viewed as a tactical lapse.

6...♘gf6 7.0–0 ♗e7 8.b3 0–0 9.♗b2



Both sides have completed the opening deployment of their forces, according to their respective plans. The middlegame struggle begins with a move of Black's, which definitely counts as an achievement for him. Another point that counts against White is that in this situation his queen's knight would be better placed on d2 than c3. Where does the chief blame lie? For one thing, when drawing up his development plan, White failed to link it to a basic strategic scheme in a sufficiently concrete way. Secondly, he didn't pay due attention to the tactical refinements of the opening. The moves ♗d3 and ♘c3 were played according to stereotype – because the aim of White's opening plan was too hazy and vague; because his project proved lacking in concreteness. In such circumstances, a player has difficulty deciding whether his bishop is better on e2 or d3, or whether his knight belongs on c3 or d2.

9...e5

A plan that leads to pawn exchanges, and hence opens up the game – and is bound to provoke a skirmish with pieces and sometimes a full-scale battle – can be described as playing to sharpen the position. Black's decision was no doubt prompted by the peculiarities of Botvinnik's style, and also perhaps by considerations relating to the overall contest.

A different concrete plan in this case would be to play for seizure of the e4-square and a consequent gain of space in the centre and on the kingside. The initial move of this plan would be 9...♗b4, and if 10.a3 then 10...♗xc3 11.♗xc3 ♘e4 12.♗e1 f5.

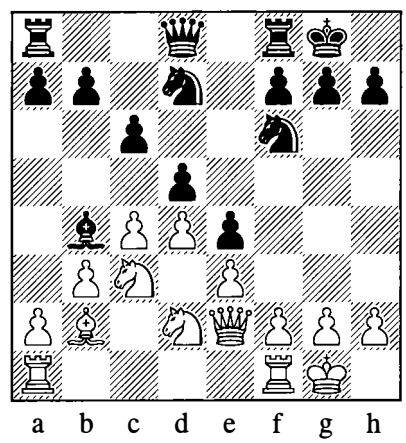
10.♗e2

White declines the challenge, but the move he makes is not just a retreat – it initiates a subtle and very specific plan of counterattack. The point is that Black now has nothing better than to push his e-pawn to e4. The variation 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 brings about an exchange of light-squared bishops and hands the initiative to White once his knight lands on f5. But after 10...e4 the specific idea of a dangerous break with f2-f3 becomes feasible.

This plan is not the only one. White could also clear up the position in the centre with 10.cxd5 exd4 11.exd4 ♘xd5 12.♘xd5 cxd5, but in that case any concrete planning would be hampered by the pin against the knight on f3 and the passive placing of the bishop on b2.

On the other hand, a livelier option is: 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.♘xd5 (After 11.♗e2 ♘xf3† 12.♗xf3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 dxc4 14.♖ad1 ♕c8, Black's extra pawn on the queenside could imperceptibly turn into a strategic asset with the further simplification of the game.) 11...♘xf3† 12.gxf3 ♗h3 13.♘xe7† ♕xe7 14.♔h1! (not 14.♖e1 ♘e4 15.f4 ♖ad8 16.♕e2 ♖xd3 17.♕xd3 ♕e6, and Black wins) 14...♗xf1 15.♕xf1 White evidently had no wish for such a sharp fight, entailing as it does a certain risk.

10...e4 11.♘d2 ♗xe2 12.♕xe2 ♗b4!



The attention of both opponents is fixed on the e4-point, and a struggle begins for possession of it. With his last move Black is not only trying to exchange off the knight on

c3; by clearing the e-file, he enables his major pieces to make contact with the crucial square.

13.a3?!

Losing an important tempo in the fight for e4.

Admittedly the break with 13.f3 would lack strength in view of 13...♗xc3 14.♗xc3 ♖e8, when Black maintains control of the e4-square and has a good outpost there for his pieces in the event of 15.fxe4 ♘xe4.

There was, however, another plan at White's disposal – involving a pawn attack on the kingside, or a breakthrough with pawns in the centre if Black should exchange off his e4-pawn. We are speaking of 13.f4, when Black could choose to adopt a defensive stance with 13...♖e8 14.g4 ♔h8 15.g5 ♘g8 16.♕g4 ♘f8 17.f5 ♕d7, but should prefer to capture with 13...exf3 14.gxf3 (14.♕xf3!?) 14...♗xc3 15.♗xc3 ♖e8 16.♖ae1 ♘h5 17.♕g2 ♖e6, giving a very sharp position that is difficult to assess but may be a little in Black's favour.

13...♗xc3 14.♗xc3 ♖e8 15.f3

Consistently pursuing the plan that White conceived on move 10.

At this point 15.f4 would force Black into 15...exf3, but this is nothing he should be afraid of:

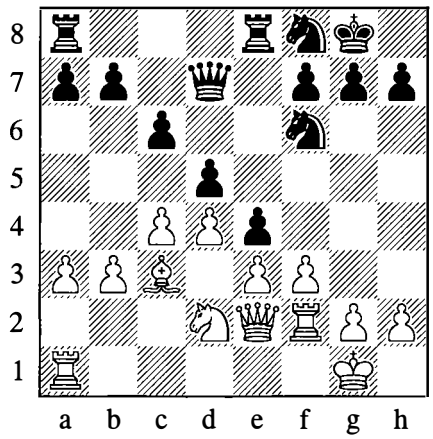
a) On 16.gxf3, he continues ...♘h5, with the threats of ...♘f4 and ...♕g5†. The white e3-pawn is very weak.

b) White should therefore play 16.♕xf3, when after 16...♕e7 17.♖fe1 (17.♖ae1 ♕xa3) 17...♘e4 18.♘xe4 ♕xe4 19.cxd5 cxd5 the position is just slightly better for Black; the outpost for his pieces on e4 is counter-balanced by the open c-file.

15...♘f8

Black could also have chosen 15...exf3, transposing to the previous note.

16.♖f2 ♕d7



17.♖af1?!

Again consistent, but... giving too little consideration to Black's counterplay. The goal White is pursuing is unattainable, and his scheme proves to be without concrete substance.

The move offering more hope was still 17.f4, for instance: 17...♕f5 18.h3 h5 19.♔h2 h4 20.♖g1, followed by opening the g-file.

17...exf3

Finally! White cannot now play 18.gxf3 in view of 18...♘g6, and if 19.♕d3 then 19...♕e6, winning the e3-pawn.

18.♖xf3 ♖e6

Black's concrete project triumphs. The e4-square is in his hands, while the e3-pawn is weak and easily vulnerable to the attack along the file. All Black's pieces are taking part in the offensive, while the enemy bishop and knight are largely inactive.

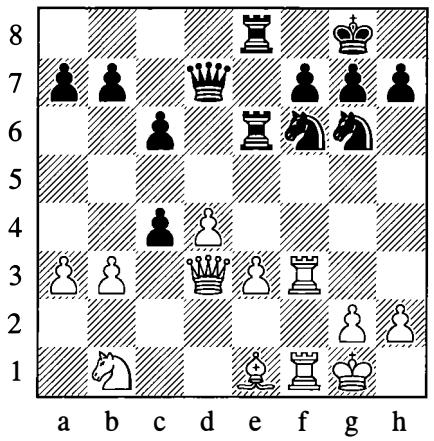
19.♕d3 ♖ae8 20.♘b1 ♘g6 21.♗e1?

A tactical oversight which, like other similar

mistakes, has resulted from a strategically difficult situation.

White should have played 21.♗d2, when Black cannot yet occupy the outpost with his knight: 21...♘e4? 22.♖xf7 ♕xf7 23.♖xf7 ♔xf7 24.cxd5 cxd5 25.♘c3 and White is not worse.

21...dxc4



22.♕xc4

In the event of 22.bxc4 ♘e5, White loses the exchange. This may have been the point he missed when making his previous move.

22...♖xe3 23.♖xe3 ♖xe3

The struggle enters its final phase, in which the acquired advantage is exploited. Black has an extra pawn and a strong position – this is fully adequate to finish the game quickly.

24.♗f2 ♘d5! 25.♘d2

Or 25.♗xe3 ♘xe3 26.♕d3 ♘xf1 27.♔xf1 ♘f4 28.♕e4 ♘e6, winning a second pawn.

25...♘gf4 26.h3 ♖c3 27.♕a4 ♘e2† 28.♔h2 ♖xh3†

After 29.gxh3 ♘df4 White is mated next move.

0–1

This game, like the two preceding ones, is a model illustration of concrete schemes triumphing against an unrealistic assessment of the position.

(iii) Dynamics

A concrete undertaking, as part of a plan, presupposes not only a view of the goal but also a decision as to the ways of attaining it. During certain stages of the game, which may be quite lengthy ones, the goal remains unobtrusive; it represents, so to speak, the element of statics in the struggle. The paths leading in the direction of the goal are the element of dynamics.

Some games are packed with an abundance of tactical ideas. For this very reason, they are characterized by frequent and qualitatively vital changes in the nature of the position. Such games are particularly dynamic. Conversely, games where the positions succeed one another without undergoing serious changes to their type can be described as lacking in dynamism. In these games, the intensity of the struggle is mollified and the emotional factor in chess thought is weakly expressed.

It is true that, strictly speaking, dynamics are inherent in the process of virtually any game to some extent or other. If dynamics disappear the struggle becomes static, the creative content grows dim and sometimes dies away altogether. It is no accident that the laws of chess allow for a draw if the position repeats itself for the third time, or if there is no capture and no change to the pawn position during a sequence of 50 moves.

The dynamics of the game are closely associated with concreteness of thought, just as concreteness of thought is in many ways defined by its dynamism. Thus it was that an emphatic dynamism distinguished the play of Chigorin, Lasker, Pillsbury and Alekhine. The same applies to the majority of Soviet Grandmasters and masters. On the other hand, players with a preference for the slow unfolding of events, and endowed with

excessive prudence, are familiar both from chess history and in our own day.

Sometimes the thinking of one and the same chess player undergoes major transformations. In this connection, the case of Nimzowitsch offers an interesting and instructive example.

In the first period of his career, Nimzowitsch's fiery temperament, the dynamics of his thinking, and his superb and original imagination brought him deserved renown as a master of the art of chess. As long as he was just such an artist, his competitive and creative path was adorned with a series of brilliant achievements; he gained the reputation of a great innovator, constantly searching, constantly daring.

From a certain moment on, however, Nimzowitsch conceived grand ideas of himself as a philosopher of chess, a bearer of chess truth, a proclaimer of chess justice. Opposing the conservative views of Tarrasch, particularly in the matter of the centre, Nimzowitsch himself imperceptibly slipped into a conservative attitude. Out of certain devices of the struggle that were generally accepted among masters, he created a theory of restraint, blockade and over-protection which he grandiloquently and somewhat boastfully named "My System".

Hampering the development of your opponent's forces; blockading his pawn chain; centralizing your pieces; preparing to replace a pawn outpost with a piece outpost; "over-protection" – according to Nimzowitsch's system, all these "principles" ought to be the guiding threads of a chess player's thinking; they are supposed to be a virtually unquestionable guarantee of success. Elevating his "principles" thus to the status of dogmas (which is what had prevented Tarrasch, in *his* day, from maintaining himself on the heights commensurate with his talent), Nimzowitsch began to suffer some painful defeats at the hands of opponents distinguished by great dynamism of thought, particularly Alekhine. Shortly before his death, Nimzowitsch lost a match to Stahlberg even though he undoubtedly surpassed him in strength, knowledge and experience. We cannot help seeing a cause of Nimzowitsch's defeat in the vein of dogmatism that characterized his thinking in that match.

Dynamic planning is not temporizing or restraining or blockading, but anticipating and preparing the desirable course of events.

Characterizing the play of Staunton, the renowned nineteenth-century English player, Morphy saw his chief defect in a lack of ability to anticipate the course of events. Interpreting Morphy's thought, we may say that he was reproaching Staunton with insufficient dynamism in his play.

Striving for dynamism in the execution of a plan means seeking the shortest paths and most energetic methods to achieve the aim.

The practical material we shall examine in the following pages provides good samples of dynamic, purposeful thought.

A. Alekhine – E. Bogoljubow

Bogo-Indian Defence
Budapest 1921

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♗b4†

Apart from this scheme which derives from Black's wish to play a Queen's Gambit without the dark-squared bishops, he has at least two dynamic game plans available. The first is to begin fighting for control of the e4-square by means of 3...b6 followed by ...♗b7. The second is to cut the Gordian knot of the opening by playing ...d5.

4.♗d2 ♗xd2† 5.♕xd2 0–0 6.♘c3 d5

Essential; Black must not allow e2-e4. However, the aim of this move is not solely prophylactic. It forms an important link in the set-up which allows Black to obtain a wealth of play in the centre after ...♘bd7, ...b6, ...♗b7 and ...c5.

7.e3 ♘bd7 8.♗d3 c6

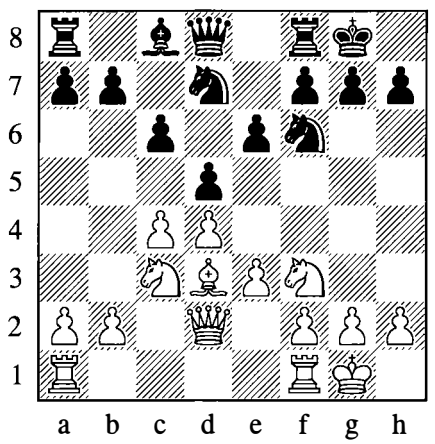
With this, Black is counting on the move that White now plays.

Nonetheless the preferable course was 8...b6 and ...♗b7, aiming to occupy the e4-point and obtaining excellent chances in the centre after ...c5 (or ...♘e4).

On the other hand, an immediate 8...c5 would facilitate White's planning; after 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xd5 exd5 11.dxc5 ♘xc5 12.0–0, the genuine weakness of the d5-pawn and the possession of the d4-square as a central base for his pieces would enable him to seize the initiative.

9.0–0

White doesn't notice that after this move a tactical possibility arises for Black. All the same White should not be severely criticized, as after 9.♖d1 ♖e8, threatening ...e5, Black would still have prospects of freeing himself.



9...dxc4 10.♗xc4 e5

The ingenious point Black has in mind is revealed by 11.dxe5 ♘xe5 12.♕xd8 ♘xf3† 13.gxf3 ♖xd8, with a free and probably even superior game. However, the operation he has undertaken also has a minus side in connection with the enemy bishop's increased activity and the weakening of the f7-square. This last circumstance means that for the moment Black's rook is tied to f8, in case of an attack by ♘g5.

We should note that with his last move Black creates something of a threat in the form of 11...e4 12.♘g5 ♘b6 13.♗b3 ♗f5 14.f3 exf3 15.♖xf3 ♗g6 (and if 16.e4 then 16...h6). White would still have the pleasanter position, but having developed his forces, Black would be able to offer serious resistance to his opponent's pressure.

11.♗b3!

It is with this neat retreat that White sets his opponent the most difficult problem. At this point 11...e4 loses a pawn to 12.♘g5 ♕e7 13.♗c2, while after 11...exd4 12.♕xd4 (12.♘xd4 and 12.exd4 are also good enough) White retains his dominant position in the centre and a considerable lead in development.

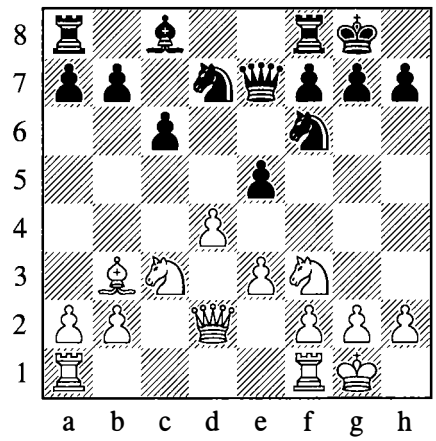
White had an interesting bishop sacrifice at his disposal in the shape of 11.♗xf7†, but as Alekhine pointed out, this would allow Black to reach a draw: 11...♖xf7 12.dxe5 ♘g4 13.e6 ♖xf3 14.exd7 ♗xd7 15.gxf3 ♘xh2 16.♔xh2 ♕h4†=

11...♕e7

The most natural move, which at first sight offers Black prospects for a concrete plan. Indeed, the threat to push with ...e4 is renewed, the queen's knight is freed from a potential pin, the d8-square is vacated for a rook, and ...♘c5 is prepared as a follow-up to ...exd4. And yet this continuation is unsatisfactory, chiefly because Black fails to anticipate the counter-measures against his scheme; he is interpreting the position statically, not dynamically.

Black's very first concern should be to free his rook from defending f7. This aim would be served by 11...h6, guarding the g5-square

against a raid by the white knight; then ...e4 would once again be threatened. In answer to 12.e4 Black could play 12...♕a5 13.♖ad1 ♖e8, with a sturdy position and prospects of counterplay in the centre.



12.e4!

A highly dynamic plan, relying on a combined offensive with the e- and f-pawns.

The determined execution of a similar plan secured victory in the 12th and 16th games of the first Botvinnik-Smyslov match (1954). We advise our readers to study those games for themselves, comparing the ideas implemented by Botvinnik with Alekhine's plan in the present game.

12...exd4?

Without taking a look into the more distant future, Black decides to develop his queenside at any cost. He does achieve this aim, but at what a price! He voluntarily clears the path of the e4-pawn, concedes the d-file to his opponent, and as a result comes under a dangerous attack. White exploits this strategic mistake superbly, with exceptional dynamism.

A better attempt to defend is by exerting pressure of his own along the e-file, although after 12...h6 13.♖ad1 ♖e8 14. ♖fe1 Black still faces difficulties.

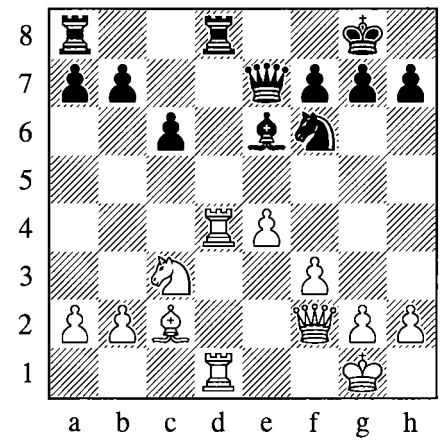
13.♘xd4 ♘c5

Of course the pawn on e4 cannot be taken.

14.♗c2 ♖d8 15.♖ad1

With the obvious threat of ♘xc6.

15...♗g4 16.f3 ♘e6 17.♕f2 ♘xd4 18.♖xd4 ♗e6 19.♖fd1



White's concrete scheme has triumphed completely, which is in no small measure due to... his opponent. This in no way detracts from the outstanding skill that Alekhine has displayed. If we review his play starting from move 11, what strikes us is how purposefully he has steered the course of events in his favour. A mere four moves ago, the white rooks were on a1 and f1; now they are already deciding the outcome of the confrontation on the d-file. The move 12.e4! served as the starting point for a pawn offensive which is now going to be executed with energy and dynamism. Throughout the game White has not made a single move that missed its mark; he has not wasted one second of his time.

19...b6

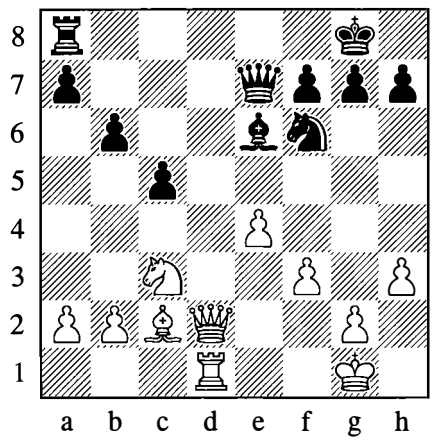
Operations on the queenside, where Black has the pawn majority, are aimless in these circumstances and merely create new

vulnerable points in his position. In other words, they are simply hastening his doom which is inevitable sooner or later.

20.h3

So that after f3-f4 Black will not have the sortie ...♘g4.

20...c5 21.♖4d2 ♖xd2 22.♕xd2



22...c4

Black's position is extremely difficult (for example 22...♗d7 is unplayable owing to 23.♘d5), but he should have attempted to prolong the fight with 22...♘e8 23.f4 f6 24.♘d5 ♕b7 25.♗b3 ♔h8.

23.f4 g6

In the event of 23...♕c5† 24.♕d4 ♕xd4† 25.♖xd4, Black would lose at least the pawn on c4, without improving his position.

24.♕d4 ♖c8 25.g4 ♗xg4 26.hxg4 ♘xg4 27.♔g2 h5 28.♘d5 ♕h4 29.♖h1 ♕d8 30.♗d1
1–0

A. Alekhine – G. Maroczy

Queen's Gambit
Bled 1931

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♗g5 ♘bd7

Black goes into the classical lines of the Orthodox Defence, in which the mutual deployment of forces generally proceeds at a slow tempo and Black has to be content with the role of defender for a relatively long time.

However, Black's position, characterized by an absence of pawn weaknesses and by considerable defensive resources, is so solid that White has to put in a major effort of preparation before proceeding to the attack.

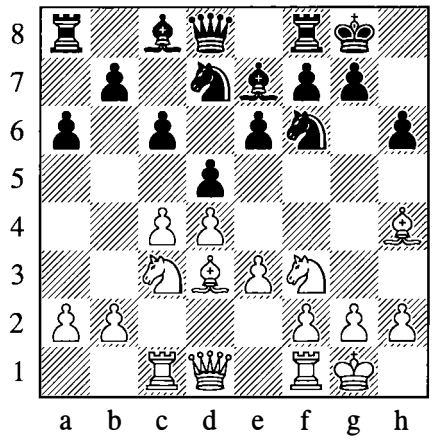
Instead of the cautious (orthodox) method of play, Black has another, sharper plan at his disposal. It is based on trying to force White to exchange with ♗xf6 and then initiating energetic play to clear up the centre and open up space for the actions of the black bishops. The tactical implementation of this plan begins with 4...h6. The bishop's retreat to c1 is illogical, and if it goes to h4 this leads to the loss of a pawn after 5...♗b4† 6.♘c3 dxc4 7.e3 b5. On 5.♗xf6, Black continues 5...♗b4† 6.♘c3 ♕xf6 7.♕b3 ♘c6, with a view to answering 8.cxd5 with 8...♘xd4. White's kingside is undeveloped, and this already allows Black to contend for the initiative at an early stage of the opening.

5.e3 h6 6.♗h4 ♗e7 7.♘c3 0–0 8.♖c1 c6 9.♗d3 a6

These seemingly modest pawn moves are preparation for deploying the queenside forces by ...dxc4, ...b5, ...♗b7 and ...c5. To avert this, White sometimes exchanges with cxd5, but this gives his opponent scope for new planning in connection with the opened e-file and c8-h3 diagonal.

10.0–0

The opening may be considered to be over, but as usual in the Orthodox Defence to the Queen's Gambit, Black still needs to solve the problem of developing his queenside, whereas White has already achieved full and harmonious development of all his forces.



10...dxc4 11.♗xc4 c5

A more promising line here appears to be 11...b5 12.♗d3 ♗b7, aiming to play ...c5, attacking the centre and opening the aggressive diagonal for the black queen's bishop.

If White answers 13.♘e4, he risks losing a pawn by 13...♘xe4 14.♗xe7 ♘xf2.

13.e4 is playable, as then 13...♘xe4 is met by 14.♘xe4 ♗xh4 15.♘d6, winning the pawn back with somewhat the better position.

An even better option is 13.a4, and if 13...b4 then 14.♗xf6 and 15.♘e4, preventing ...c5.

12.a4

This move stops the plan for Black's queenside development just mentioned, but it also has its snags: it weakens White's own queenside and allows an isolated centre pawn to be formed on d4. In the next phase of the struggle Maroczy sets his opponent some quite difficult problems, and it is only Alekhine's superb insight into the position that enables him to create turbulent complications not unfavourable to himself.

12...♕a5 13.♕e2 cxd4 14.exd4 ♘b6

Maroczy's plan is concrete and dynamic. One piece after another comes into play. Black aims for a set-up with rooks on c8 and d8, and his queen's bishop on e8 – enabling him to work up a successful attack on the centre.

15.♗d3!

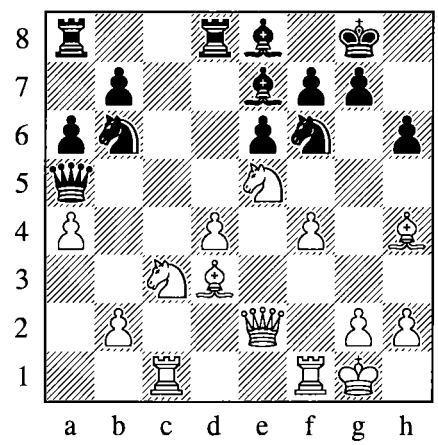
White too is on his toes. The object of *his* attack, in which all his minor pieces and his queen are to take part, is the enemy king. The dangerous nature of this attack is attested by the variation 15...♘xa4? 16.♘e4 ♘d5 17.♗xe7 ♘xe7 18.♘e5, and if 18...♘f5 then 19.♕g4 ♘xd4? (19...f6!?) 20.♘f6† ♔h8 21.♕g6!.

15...♗d7 16.♘e5

Threatening a direct attack against the h7-point with 17.♗xf6 and 18.♕e4.

16...♖fd8 17.f4 ♗e8

The fight for the initiative has entered a critical phase. Black begins an attack on the centre – the threat is ...♖xd4. White's queenside is also weak.



18.♘g4!

Protecting the d4-pawn would hand the initiative to Black. White would be forced to switch from attack to defence, and given the weaknesses that have arisen in his camp, this could bring grave consequences in its wake.

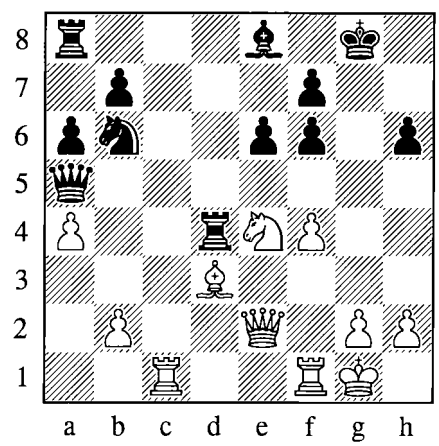
Alekhine had realized in advance that the pawn sacrifice would be necessary. This example brings us up against the problem of risk in the chess struggle. Alekhine could not of course have foreseen the course of his intended attack in all its ramifications, and was taking a risk in giving up a central pawn to his formidable opponent. The risk factor in the implementation of a plan is a major question which up to now has been little studied, and which deserves special investigation.

18...♖xd4

Black accepts the challenge. This decision is not obligatory. He could continue on the lines of his plan by playing (say) 18...♘bd5, with the aim of strengthening his kingside defences and postponing until later the exploitation of White's chronic weaknesses in the centre and on the queenside. In these circumstances 19.♘xd5 can be answered by 19...♕xd5 20.♘xf6† ♗xf6 21.♗xf6 gxf6. White then has no decisive continuations, while his weaknesses (such as the d4-pawn) begin to be felt even more acutely.

However, harvesting the fruits of his dynamic play was too tempting a prospect for Black...

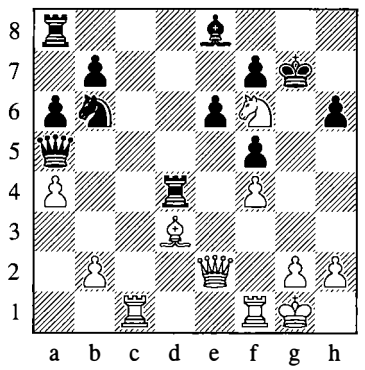
19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.♘xf6† gxf6 21.♘e4



21...♖ad8?

All in the same spirit of utilizing his acquired assets as energetically as possible. This underestimation of his opponent's kingside threats will cost Black dearly.

By first playing 21...f5, the doubling of his rooks on the d-file would gain in strength, while White's attack would come up against a sturdy barrier after 22.♘f6† ♔g7 and now:



a) 23.♘h5† ♔f8 Alekhine has indicated that he would then have had to resort to 24.b3, but after 24...♗c6, with the threat of ...♕d5, Black would achieve a positional as well as a material plus.

b) White can play the spectacular 23.♗b5! (threatening ♕e5). There is then a clear-cut path to a draw, with 23...♔xf6 24.♕e5† ♔e7 25.♕xd4 axb5 26.♕c5† ♔f6 27.♕e5†. On the other hand, with any capture on b5, Black would risk coming under a strong attack.

22.♘xf6† ♔f8 23.♘h7†?!

It is more accurate to immediately advance 23.f5! with a decisive attack. For example, 23...♖xd3 24.fxe6 fxe6 25.♕xe6 and Black will soon be mated.

23...♔e7

Staying on the kingside offers Black no hope: 23...♔g7 24.♕g4† ♔h8 25.♕h4 ♕e5! 26.♕xh6 (or 26.♘f6 ♕g5 27.fxg5 ♖xh4 28.♘xe8 with a decisive plus in the ending)

26...♕g7 27.♕h4 ♔g8 28.♘f6† ♔f8 White can now win with either 29.♖c5! (threatening 30.♘h7† ♔g8 31.♖g5) or 29.♗e4! (threatening ♖c3-g3).

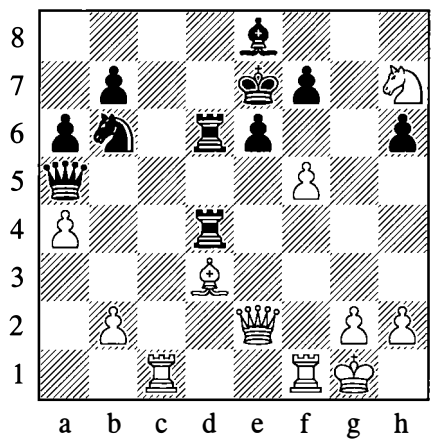
24.f5!

Such is the dynamic force of Alekhine's play. This move, which had undoubtedly been seen in advance, creates new threats and defends the bishop indirectly, as 24...♖xd3 is met by 25.f6† and then ♕xd3†.

24...♖8d6

Black renews the threat of ...♖xd3 and clears a refuge for his king on d8.

Other moves do not repulse White's attack. He meets 24...e5 with 25.♗b5; on 24...♕d5, he plays 25.fxe6 fxe6 26.♕f2 ♖xd3 27.♕f8† and 28.♘f6#.



25.b4!?

An inventive tactical stroke. White needs to bring his queen into the attack. The sortie ♕h5 would be parried by ...♕d2. The queen's other invasion route into the enemy camp is via the e5-square, which the black queen is guarding. With the move played, White opens up one or other of these thoroughfares: in the case of 25...♖xb4 the black queen is cut off from d2, while 25...♕xb4 diverts it from the fifth rank.

25...♕xb4

After 25...♖xb4, Alekhine gives the variation 26.♕h5 e5 27.f6† ♔d8 28.♕xh6 ♖xd3 29.♕f8 ♖d7 30.♖c5 ♕xa4 31.♖xe5 as winning for White.

[Editor's note: "Alas, after 31...♔c7! there is no trace of a win." – Kasparov]

26.♕e5

Threatening ♕f6† and ♘f8#.

26...♘d7 27.♕h8

This threat of a pretty mate in three moves (28.f6† ♔d8 29.♕xe8† ♔xe8 30.♖c8#) is now overlooked by Black.

27...♖xd3

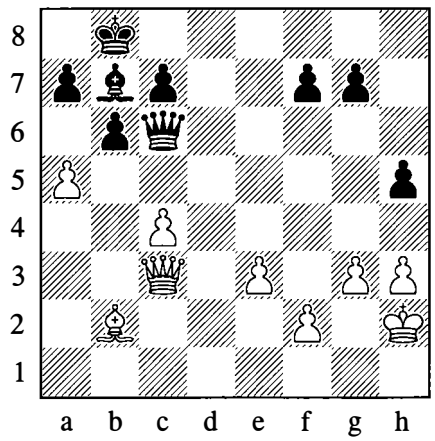
[Editor's note: "The best reply is 27...♖c6 28.♖xc6 bxc6 29.fxe6 fxe6 30.♘f6 ♘xf6 31.♕xf6† ♔d7 32.♕xh6 ♖d5, and there is still everything to play for." – Kasparov]

28.f6†
1–0

(iv) Harmony

Together with concreteness and dynamics, a further principle of planning in chess is the harmonious action of the forces. Of course we are not speaking here of a mechanical cooperation between the pieces but of their concerted activity within the context of a unified plan. It is important therefore that the harmonious action should be purposeful, that is, it should be directed to implementing a realistic game plan that derives from the specific features of the position.

To clarify our thought, let us look at the simple position below.



The queens and bishops on both sides are acting harmoniously, but whereas on Black's side this harmony is in the highest degree effective, having the enemy king position as its object, on the White side it misses the mark, in spite of the wholly identical outward configuration.

The conclusion is clear: harmony in the action of the forces is not a self-sufficient factor but is subordinate to the overall plan of the game. Harmonious action within the framework of a realistic plan means that each piece is complementing the actions of the others and playing its indispensable part to achieve the aim in view.

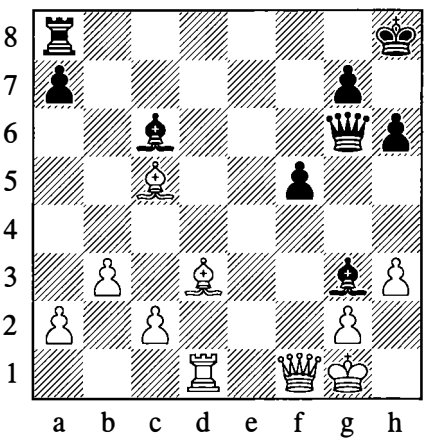
Typical forms of harmony are met with in virtually any game. Rooks doubled on a file; occasionally, all three major pieces concentrated on an open line; several pieces and pawns attacking a designated object; pieces doubled on a diagonal; concerted action of the rooks on the seventh or second rank (rook "hurricanes"!); these and many other coordinated operations of the pieces can serve as a vivid illustration of purposeful harmony.

The configurations performing the harmonious action depend on the tasks laid down by the plan. Thus when the queen and bishop are doubled on a diagonal, it sometimes pays to place the queen in front (as in the example we have just seen), while in other cases we should prefer to station it behind the bishop. The same applies to the operation of a rook and queen on an open file.

Thus the character of the position, the goal envisaged by the plan, and the player's specific insight into the dynamics of the situation are factors that decide not only where the harmonious action should be directed but also what structural form it should take. Harmony is dependent both on a realistic plan and on the peculiarities of the position considered in the light of dynamics. From this point of view, let us examine three finishes.

Starchenkov – P. Romanovsky

Leningrad 1929



Black's queen and bishop are harmoniously exerting pressure against the g2-point; there is also a threat to set up a queen-and-bishop battery on the h2-b8 diagonal, for example after ...♗c7 and ...♕g3.

32...♗f4!

The threat is on the way to becoming reality. Above the white king's position the storm clouds are thickening.

33.♕f2 ♖e8

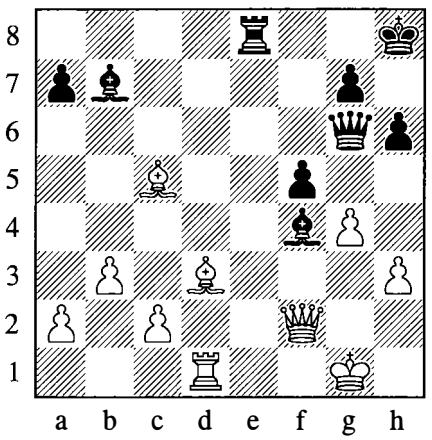
Black prepares a further concentration of fire against the g2-pawn; in certain circumstances he may continue with ...♖e3!.

34.g4?!

This impetuous move allows a dangerous attack by Black's diagonal pieces.

White should play 34.♗f1, relieving the queen from the defence of the g2-pawn.

34...♗b7



35.♗b5

The only way to prevent ...♕c6, but this proves inadequate.

Somewhat surprisingly, White can just survive with 35.♕xf4 ♕c6 36.♗f1! ♕xc5† 37.♕f2 ♕c6 38.♗g2 ♕xg2† 39.♕xg2 ♗xg2 40.♔xg2 ♖e2†, and a drawn rook endgame is reached.

35...fxg4 36.♗xe8 ♕e4

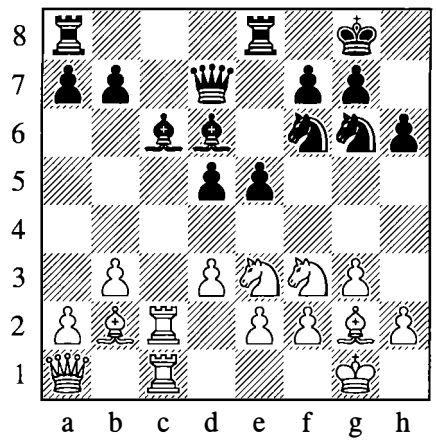
White resigned in view of: 37.♔f1 ♕h1† 38.♕g1 (38.♔e2 ♗f3† 39.♔d3 ♕xd1† 40.♔c3 gxh3) 38...♕f3† 39.♔e1 ♕c3† 40.♔f1 ♗a6†

0–1

In this game White not only sinned against the principle of harmony, he also neglected one of the important corollaries of that principle: economy of force. He wasted the combined efforts of king and queen on the protection of g2, whereas the queen could have been relieved by the bishop without any adverse effects.

R. Reti – F. Yates

New York 1924



In this example what strikes you immediately is the harmonious action of all White's pieces, whose force, according to plan, is directed against the centre. True, Black has concentrated considerable forces in defence of that area, but his position is nonetheless vulnerable at the e5-point. Another fact that plays a serious role is that he has done nothing to oppose the concerted action of the enemy rooks on the c-file.

17.d4! e4

A forced reply. The road is now opened for White to invade on the e5-square, attacked as it is by four of his units while only three enemy pieces are defending it.

Defending the e5-pawn is worse, for example 17...♕e7? 18.♘f5 ♕e6 19.♘xd6 ♕xd6 20.dxe5 and White wins at once.

18.♘e5

This invasion is made possible by the fact that White's bishop on b2 is placed in front of his queen. If it were the other way round, 18.♘e5 would be unplayable.

18...♗xe5 19.dxe5 ♘h7

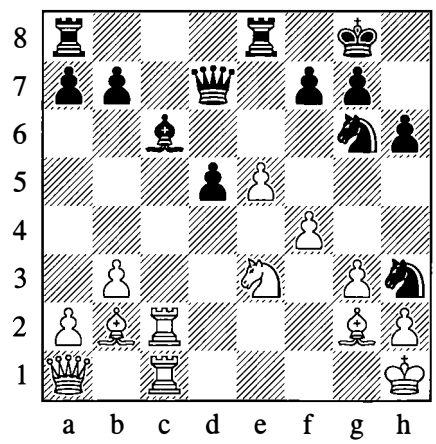
Again the only move; 19...♘g4 fails to 20.♗h3 h5 21.f3.

20.f4 exf3

Else f4-f5.

21.exf3 ♘g5 22.f4 ♘h3† 23.♔h1

Black's pieces are acting disjointedly and are helpless to resist his opponent's attack.



23...d4 24.♗xd4 ♖ad8 25.♖xc6

So the battery against c6 has played its part.

25...bxc6 26.♗xc6 ♘f2†

Black would also be left without saving chances after 26...♕xd4 27.♕xd4 ♖xd4 28.♗xe8.

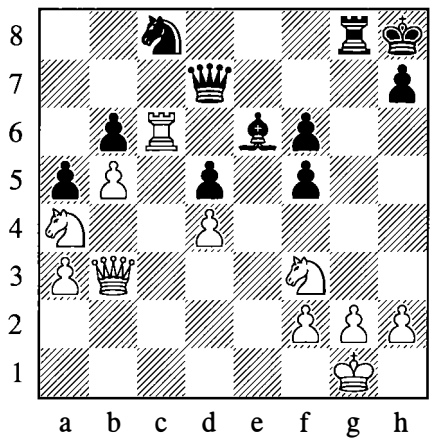
27.♔g2 ♕xd4 28.♕xd4 ♖xd4 29.♗xe8 ♘e4 30.e6 ♖d2† 31.♔f3
1–0

A fact that calls for attention in this finish is that all seven white pieces played their part in gaining the victory; each one of them (even including the rook on c1, which didn't make a single move) was doing a "job" that was both indispensable and sufficient. Not one of White's fighting units exerted more effort than was demanded of it, which means that they were observing due economy of force – a factor that plays no unimportant role in the complex processes of the middlegame.

The third finale in this group will serve to illustrate the difficult and frequently arising question as to whether, and in what measure, a material deficit (such as a pawn minus) is compensated by a disruption of the harmony in the enemy pieces' actions. This is the case that arose in the following position, when White voluntarily divided his forces in the hunt for "material goods".

A. Suetin – V. Antoshin

22nd USSR Championship semi-final, Yerevan 1954



White has an advantage sufficient for victory. However, instead of the correct 27.♕e3, he was tempted to win a pawn.

27.♘xb6

After this his rook lost contact with the rest of his pieces. The result was that Black's small force, working in astounding harmony, conducted a decisive attack on the king.

From this viewpoint the finish of the game is exceptionally instructive.

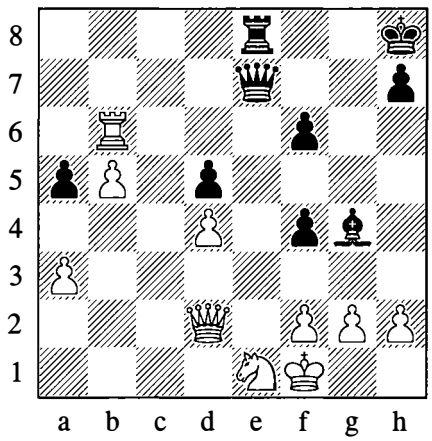
27...♘xb6 28.♖xb6 f4 29.♘e1

It would have been better to bring the rook to the defence with 29.♖c6. The combination 29...♖xg2† 30.♔xg2 ♗h3† 31.♔h1 ♕g4 could be thwarted by 32.♘e1 or 32.♘h4.

29...♗h3 30.♕f3

After 30.♔f1!? ♗xg2†! 31.♘xg2 ♕g4 32.♘xf4 ♕xf4 Black's counterattack is sufficient for a draw, but no more.

30...♕e7 31.♔f1 ♗g4 32.♕d3 ♖e8 33.♕d2



33...f3!

The pawn joins Black's "team". The threat is 34...♕xe1†! 35.♕xe1 fxg2†.

34.♘xf3 ♕xa3 35.♕d1

White's position is indefensible.

On 35.♖c6, Black has the decisive 35...♗xf3 36.gxf3 ♕xf3 37.♔g1 ♕g4† 38.♔h1 ♖g8.

Instead 35.♘e1, followed by surrendering the queen for rook and bishop, must be acknowledged as White's best try, but after 35...♗e2† 36.♕xe2 ♖xe2 37.♔xe2 ♕e7†! 38.♔f1 ♕b4 his resistance cannot last long.

35...♕b2 36.♖xf6

White misses the threat, but there is no holding out against the advance of the a-pawn.

36...♖c8 37.h3 ♖c1 38.♕xc1 ♕xc1† 39.♔e2 ♗d7 40.♖f8† ♔g7 41.♖b8 ♗xb5† 0–1

The final position, depicting the harmonious action of Black's queen and bishop, is just as pretty and instructive as the entire attack starting from move 28.

One of the characteristic features of Alekhine's style was the endeavour to disorganize his opponent's forces – to prevent them from acting in harmony. The following game is a vivid example of such tactics.

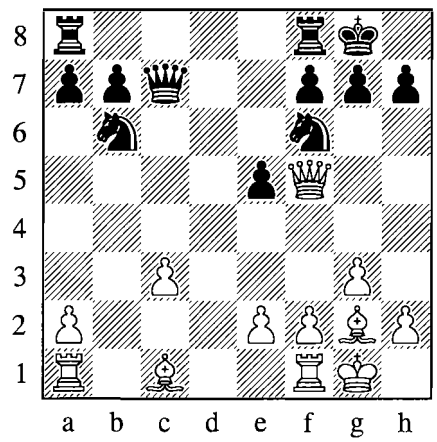
A. Alekhine – M. Euwe

Catalan Opening
World Championship (14), Netherlands 1937

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♘f3 dxc4 5.♕a4† ♘bd7 6.♕xc4 c5 7.♗g2 ♘b6 8.♕d3 cxd4 9.0–0 ♗e7 10.♘xd4 0–0 11.♘c3 e5 12.♘f5 ♗b4 13.♕c2 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♗xf5

On the immediate 14...♕c7, White obtains excellent prospects with 15.♖d1 followed by ♗g5. Black will have to take the knight anyway.

15.♕xf5 ♕c7



Development is complete, and on both sides the pieces are harmoniously placed. The question is how far this harmony will further the implementation of plans in the next phase of the game.

16.♗h6

Threatening to take the pawn on g7. Black could have answered 16.♗g5 with 16...♘fd7 and then ...f6, bolstering his position in the centre. But now, 16...♘fd7 is met by 17.♕g5 winning the exchange.

16...♘bd7 17.♕g5

Alekhine himself gave this move a question mark, indicating 17.♗e3 as the correct continuation. We can hardly agree with his view. Black would reply 17...♖ac8 followed by ...b6, with good play on the c-file.

With his last move, on the other hand, White achieves a great deal. He separates the enemy rooks, locking one of them temporarily in a "cage"; he forces Black's active knight right back to the rear, releasing the centre from the influence of this piece; and finally, he weakens the position of the knight on d7. The fact that his own bishop will be imprisoned for a move or two (which is why Alekhine blamed his queen move) is far less significant than these considerations, which are about disrupting the unity of Black's forces.

17...♘e8 18.♖ab1

An even more energetic line was 18.♖fd1, threatening to free the bishop by ♕f5.

For example if 18...♖d8, then 19.♗h3 f5 20.♗xf5 ♖xf5 (20...♘df6 21.♖xd8 ♕xd8 22.♕d2) 21.♕xf5 gxh6 22.♕e6† ♔h8 23.♖d3, and the chances are obviously with White.

Similarly 18...♘b6 19.a4! a5 can be met with an interesting retort: 20.♕f5!? gxh6 21.♗e4 ♔g7! (After 21...f6 22.♖ab1, White threatens ♖xb6 or a rook invasion on d7 if the black knight moves.) 22.♕xh7† ♔f6 White has compensation for the piece but there is nothing decisive. For this reason, 20.♖ab1 first is stronger, making ♕f5 a more powerful threat.

Black ought to reply 18...♘c5 – on this square the knight is securely placed and also controls the e4 point. In the event of 19.♕g4 ♕c8, Black reaches an acceptable ending.

18...♘c5

Now the white bishop slips away from the danger zone without any fuss.

Black could also play 18...♘b6 19.a4 f6 20.♕h4!. Here 20...gxh6?! 21.a5 would be promising for White, but 20...♘d6 gives Black a solid position.

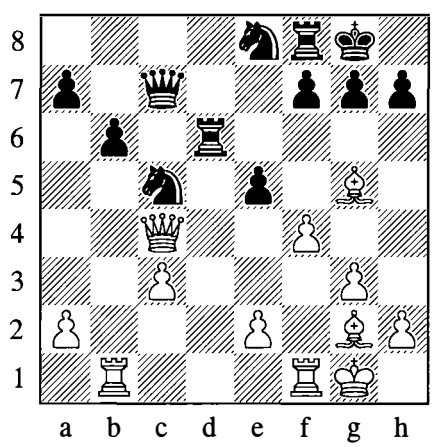
19.♕g4 ♖d8 20.♗g5 ♖d6

The lack of harmony in the actions of his rooks is a serious defect of Black's position. It's easy to see that the "blame" for this lies with his opponent's 17th move.

21.♕c4 b6 22.f4

This attacking idea meets with an ingenious retort.

22.♖fd1 is a more solid approach, although after 22...♘f6 followed by ...♖fd8 Black has practically levelled the position.



22...♖g6

A very pretty reply, which not only checks White's foray with the f-pawn but also prepares ...♘d6, "extricating" the imprisoned rook.

23.♖bd1?

This move, which carries a threat of ♗d8, will be seen to be unsatisfactory. The position has become double-edged, and White should therefore have continued 23.♕d5 (with the same threat), aiming to meet 23...♖d6 by returning his queen to c4, and to answer 23...♘d6 with 24.fxe5.

23...e4?

An inaccuracy in return, after which Alekhine's last move, though objectively unsatisfactory, acquires great strength. By contrast, 23...♘d6 24.♕d5 ♘f5 25.♔f2 ♖e8 26.♗d8 ♕b8 27.fxe5 ♖ge6! (but not 27...♖xe5? 28.♗c7!) would have given Black a winning counterattack.

24.♗h4

24.♖d5 is more accurate, taking the f5-point under control to forestall the threat of ...♘d6 followed by ...♘f5.

24...b5

Here again, 24...♘d6 is very good. Black meets 25.♕d5 (otherwise 25...♘f5) with 25...♘a4.

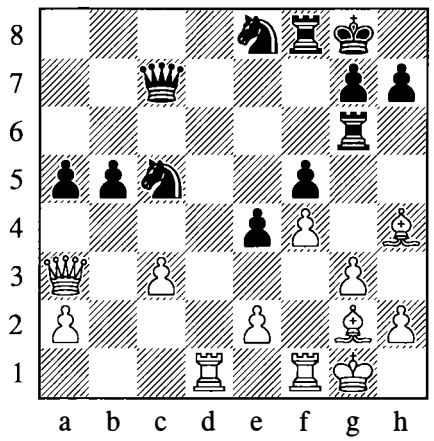
25.♕b4

Black reckoned on complicating matters on the kingside after 25.♕xb5 ♘d6 and then ...♘f5, utilizing the unfavourable position of the enemy rooks. But there is a flaw in Black's scheme; after 26.♕b4, the immediate 26...♘f5 is strongly answered by 27.♖d5, while in the case of 26...a5 27.♕d4 ♘f5 White has 28.♕d8!, forcing the transition to an ending with an extra pawn.

25...a5 26.♕a3 f5

Black can play 26...♘d6 27.♖d5 ♘db7 and there is still a full-blooded fight.

On 26...♖d6 White has the interesting combination 27.♗e7! ♖xd1 28.♗xc5, attempting to profit from the extremely inharmonious position of the rook on f8. Black continues with 28...♖xf1†, answering either recapture with 29...b4! 30.cxb4 ♘d6 31.♕xa5 ♕c6.White has two pawns for the exchange, but any definitive verdict is still a long way off.



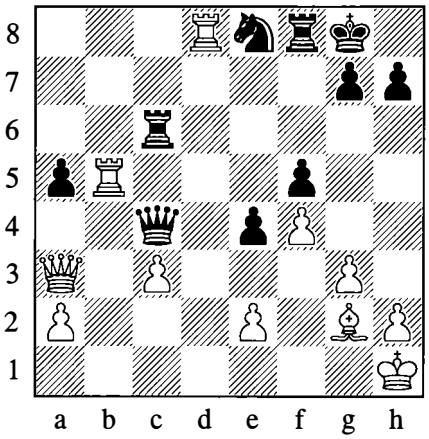
27.♗d8!

In his note to this move, Alekhine observes that White "thus prevents the harmonious cooperation of Black's forces".

27...♕a7 28.♔h1 ♖a6 29.♖d5 ♘e6

Black misses a tactical solution to his problems – 29...♘d6!, bringing the unfortunate rook into play. His next three moves are not the best either; once he loses a pawn his position becomes hopeless, and a tactical oversight concludes the affair.

30.♖fd1 ♘xd8 31.♖xd8 ♕f7 32.♖1d5 ♖c6 33.♖xb5 ♕c4



34.♖xf5!

A combination based on the concerted action of all White's forces. If now 34...♖xf5, then 35.♖xe8† ♔f7 36.♕e7† ♔g6 37.♗xe4 ♖f6 38.g4.

34...♖cf6 35.♖xf6 gxf6 36.♖d4

Of course 36.♕b3 would decide the game more simply and quickly, but in his notes Alekhine "pleads" time trouble.

36...♕xe2 37.♕b3† ♔h8 38.♖xe4 ♕d2 39.♕b1 ♕xc3 40.♕e1 ♕xe1 41.♖xe1

The game has reached an ending in which, thanks to his extra pawn and better placed pieces, White had no trouble achieving victory on move 52. Black's rook stood still on f8 for a stretch of thirty-two moves!

...1–0

We will examine one more game to conclude this section.

S. Gothilf – P. Romanovsky

Philidor's Defence
Match (4) 1923

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♘bd7 5.♗c4 ♗e7 6.0–0

Attempts to solve the problems of this opening line with the forcing continuation 6.♗xf7† ♔xf7 7.♘g5† ♔g8 8.♘e6 ♕e8 9.♘xc7 ♕g6 10.♘xa8 ♕xg2 11.♖f1 exd4 have not brought White success. Black threatens, after ...♘e5, to launch a powerful concerted attack with all four minor pieces and the queen, against which White will have great difficulty finding an adequate defence. The point is that his rooks on f1 and a1 are disunited and unable to support each other, while his knight on a8 is also cut off from the rest of his forces. If now 12.♕xd4, then 12...♘e5 13.f4 ♘fg4, and the threat of ...♗h4† proves deadly.

6...0–0 7.♗e3

With this move White completes the mobilization of his forces, which appear to be deployed in a fully harmonious manner. Nonetheless his bishop move does not merit approval. After all, White's task (and Black's too, for that matter) is not simply to develop his pieces harmoniously but to do so in pursuit of a specific, well planned objective. This criterion is not met by 7.♗e3, a move aimed solely at passive defence of the centre. A purposeful course of action would be to attack the centre energetically with 7.♗g5 followed by ♕e2 and ♖ad1.

7...c6 8.♗b3

The advance of Black's queenside pawns is linked to a plan of attack on the centre, specifically against the e4-pawn. It would therefore be more circumspect to prevent this advance by playing a2-a4.

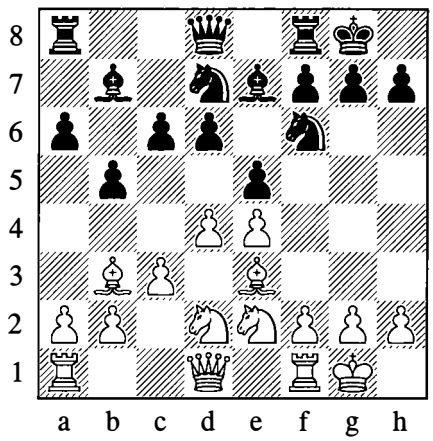
8...b5 9.♘d2 a6 10.♘e2

The continuation 10.f4 exd4 11.♗xd4 c5 12.♗xf6 ♘xf6 13.♗d5 ♗g4 (13...b4!?) 14.♕e1 (14.♘f3 offers more chance of maintain the balance) 14...b4 15.♘e2 ♘xd5 16.exd5 ♗f6 would lead to an obvious advantage for Black, in view of his threats of ...♗xb2 and ...♖e8.

10...♗b7

Of course 10...exd4 would be answered by 11.♘xd4, but now the capture of the d4-pawn is a threat.

11.c3



11...c5

By attacking the e4-pawn Black endeavours to provoke d4-d5, after which White's operation with f2-f4 will lose its point and his light-squared bishop will be hemmed in by his own pawns on d5 and e4. With a closed centre Black, by contrast, will acquire active possibilities on the kingside. Despite this, White falls in with his opponent's intentions, evidently fearing the variation 12.♗c2 cxd4 13.cxd4 d5! with initiative in the centre.

12.d5 c4!

Black's plan is moulded into its final form. With his next move he brings about an exchange of his knight for the bishop on e3, aiming to transfer his own bishop to the a7-g1 diagonal. Admittedly the moment for doing so will only arrive twenty-four (!) moves later, but the manoeuvre itself is already envisaged at this stage.

13.♗c2 ♘g4 14.♘g3 ♘xe3

Against this exchange it could be objected that Black is voluntarily opening the f-file and thereby increasing the field of action of the hostile rook. However, each move ought to be judged not by the consequences that immediately meet the eye but according to the role it plays in the game plan as a whole. It can happen that a move appears wholly insignificant and downright useless in itself, while playing a most vital part in the plan. From what has already been said, it will be clear to the reader that the manoeuvre ...♘f6-g4xe3 forms a small but important component in Black's scheme. Consequently the particular reservation about opening the f-file should in this case be disregarded.

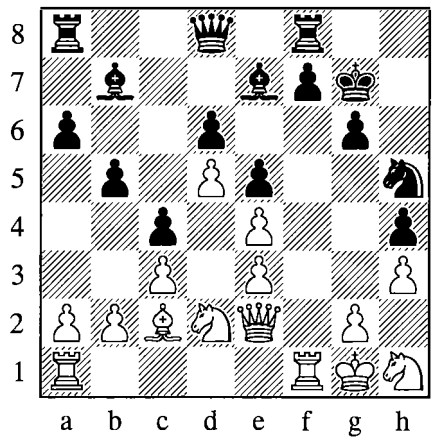
15.fxe3 g6 16.♕e2

Can we say that White's queen and rooks are inharmoniously placed? No, we cannot. And yet the harmony of White's pieces, unrelated to a plan and lacking a specific purpose, is nothing more than a mechanical interconnection. This is, so to speak, not harmonious action but harmonious inaction – the result of the passive tactics White has adopted. It permits Black to carry out his plan of attack without any hindrance, relying on the genuinely harmonious action of all his pieces, even including the king.

White should be planning to play on the queenside – the only sector where he can give his opponent some trouble and do at least something to limit his freedom of action. As the basis for a realistic plan he should be thinking about advancing with a2-a4 and b2-b3, then switching his major pieces to the open files and using his minor pieces to attack

the pawn on c4 (or b5). This possibility will remain available during the next few moves.

16...♘f6 17.♖f2 h5 18.h3 h4 19.♘h1 ♔g7 20.♖ff1 ♘h5



Over the course of 18 moves, without hurrying, Black will be preparing to break with ...f5, arranging all his pieces in accordance with the principle of harmony. Once the f-file is opened, his rooks will use it to strike the decisive blow.

21.♘f3 ♗c8 22.♘h2 ♗g5 23.♖fe1 ♗d7 24.♘f3 ♗e7 25.♖f1

A more consistent move was 25.♘h2, seeing that Black can now be said to have gained a tempo – three moves ago the position was the same, except that his bishop was still on c8. It often happens that in positions with blocked pawn chains the loss of a tempo is insignificant. Here, however, despite the fact that all sixteen pawns are on the board, the position cannot at all be regarded as closed, in view of the possible break on the f-file. In relation to that possibility, the bishop is better placed on d7 than on c8, since after ...♕c8 the black queen and bishop will start directing their concerted fire at the breakthrough point – the f5-square.

25...♖h8 26.♕f2 ♗e8

The f7-point needs protecting.

27.♖fe1 g5

This move is playable because White is powerless to utilize the f5-point; it follows that in this position, the f5-square is not a weakness.

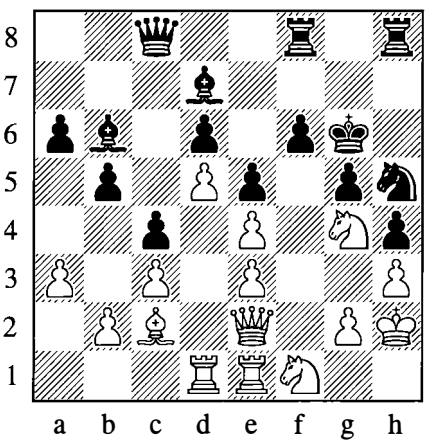
28.♘h2 ♗d7 29.♕e2 ♕c8 30.♘f2

Attacking g4 for a fourth time, but what next? On both sides the forces are acting in concert, but on Black's side the harmony serves a determined offensive plan, whereas on White's it is founded on the manoeuvres of a waiting game. This is an immense difference.

30...♘g3 31.♕f3 ♕b7 32.♘f1 ♘h5 33.♘h2 ♖af8 34.a3 ♔g6 35.♖ad1 ♗d8 36.♘f1 ♗b6

So this is when the bishop finally takes up its combat position!

37.♔h2 f6 38.♕e2 ♕c8 39.♘g4



Black had originally intended to double his rooks on the f-file behind the pawn, but on looking more closely into the position he concluded that by playing ♖d2 and ♗d1 White could force the knight back to g7 – and yet according to the plan this knight is appointed to invade on g3. In any case, the hour for launching the attack has struck!

39...f5 40.exf5† ♗xf5 41.♗xf5† ♕xf5 42.♖c1 ♖h7 43.♕c2

It's hard to call this move a mistake, but without queens it is undoubtedly easier for Black to exploit his advantage.

43...♕xc2 44.♖xc2 ♖hf7 45.♘d2

With 45.♖cc1 White could retain possibilities of resisting more stubbornly.

45...♘g3 46.♘f3 e4 47.♘d4 ♗xd4 48.cxd4

At first sight 48.exd4 looks better, but Black then wins with an exchange sacrifice: 48...♖f1 49.♖cc1 ♖1f2 50.♘xf2 ♖xf2 51.♖b1 ♔f5 52.♔g1 ♖c2 (threatening ...♔f4 and then ...e3) 53.♖f1† ♘xf1 54.♖xf1† ♔g6 55.♖f2 ♖xf2 56.♔xf2 ♔f5 57 ♔e3 g4 winning.

48...♖f1

All Black's pieces are acting in perfect harmony; on the white side, it is each piece acting for itself. Resistance is useless.

49.♖cc1 ♖xe1 50.♖xe1 a5

White resigned in view of 51.♔g1 b4 52.axb4 axb4 53 ♘f2 c3 54.bxc3 bxc3, followed by ...c2 and ...c1=♕.

0–1

In this game White sinned against all the principles of planning. His play lacked a concrete project; hardly any dynamics could be detected; finally, there was no harmonious activity of his pieces.

Let us sum up what has been said.

The harmonious action of the pieces must be subordinated to a planned goal. It will be effective only when it represents the path to realizing a concrete, dynamic plan. Harmony of a purely structural type, founded only the outward interconnection of the pieces, not only fails to assist the execution of a concrete design but in some cases even impedes it.

Harmonious activity can work in a variety of structures, depending on the peculiarities of the position; it is a tactical force in the struggle. The more economical the activity, the more effective it will be.

A gain of space promotes the harmonious action of the pieces. Open ranks and free space in the rear of the position are a special help, facilitating the transfer of pieces from one wing to the other.

Finally, harmony in the actions of the pieces is one of the basic elements of chess aesthetics. Combinations, the chief form in which beauty in the art of chess expresses itself, also constitute the perfect form of harmonious activity.

(B) Squares

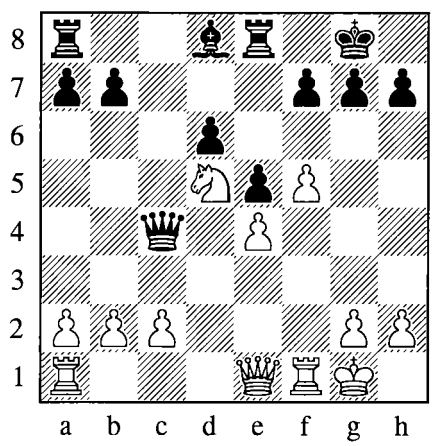
(i) Weak point

In the process of a game of chess, weak and strong points tend to be formed in the camps of both opponents. A strong point is a square where some piece or other can settle itself so firmly as to be hard to dislodge or exchange. A strong square for one of the players will naturally be a weak one for the other.

Let us clarify what has just been said with an example.

V. Smyslov – I. Rudakovsky

14th USSR Championship, Moscow 1945



The d5-square is a strong point for White and a weak point for Black. The white knight that has established itself there cannot be evicted or exchanged for a piece of the same value, and its action, ranging over many squares in the Black camp, severely constricts the enemy. With the support of this knight it is easy for White to carry out an attack on his opponent's king position.

Indeed, the game from which this position is taken ended in a quick defeat for Black:

18.c3 b5 19.b3 ♕c5† 20.♔h1 ♖c8 21.♖f3 ♔h8 22.f6! gxf6 23.♕h4 ♖g8 24.♘xf6 ♖g7 25.♖g3 ♗xf6 26.♕xf6 ♖g8 27.♖d1 d5 28.♖xg7
1–0

It is quite easy to see that Black's main trouble was the impossibility not only of controlling the d5-square but even of attacking it. This circumstance was precisely what constituted its weakness. If Black had had a pawn on c7 in the diagram position instead of on d6, the point d5 would have ceased to be weak, for by playing ...c6 Black could attack the knight and force it to retreat. The same would apply if Black had a light-squared bishop or a knight instead of his dark-squared bishop, and the knight on d5 could consequently be exchanged off.

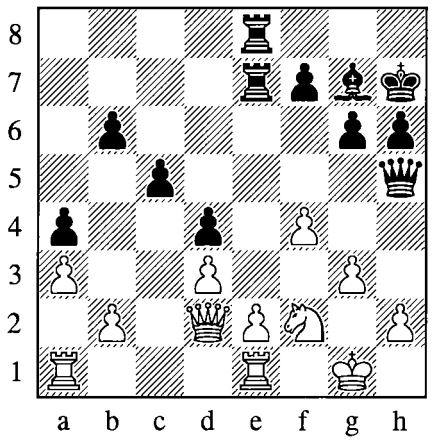
So the potential weakness of a square results from the impossibility of attacking it with pawns. However, such a square must be counted as a genuine weakness only if the opponent threatens to occupy it with a piece that cannot be driven away or removed by an exchanging operation.

A weak square is at the same time a weak point, but the concept of a "weak point" not only embraces a weak square.

A weak point may also be a pawn that is threatened with attack by enemy pieces and can be defended only with great difficulty.

N. Zubarev – A. Rubinstein

Moscow 1925



In this position, White has a weak point on e2 where his backward pawn is located.

The e2-pawn is attacked by three pieces and defended only by two. It is important to note that the e3-square is also a weak point in White's position, making the move e2-e4 unplayable. On 34.♘e4 Black plays 34...f5, while after 34.g4 ♕h4 35.♔g2 ♖e3! 36.♖ac1 f5 37.gxf5 gxf5 White loses the f4-pawn and in addition faces an irresistible attack. Zubarev preferred to surrender the e2-pawn at once, but this didn't save him from a quick debacle:

34.♕d1 ♖xe2 35.♖xe2 ♕xe2 36.♕xa4 ♖e6 37.♖b1 ♕f3 38.♕d1 ♖e2 39.♕f1 c4 40.b4

Of course, 40.dxc4 would have been met by 40...d3 and an unpreventable ...♗d4.

40...cxd3 41.♖b3 ♖xf2
0–1

A weak point may also be a pawn which is not threatened with anything for the time being but may become an object of the opponent's attack after a while. Thus, in the starting position, the points f2 and f7 are weaker than others because they can be subjected to

a systematic attack in a number of openings; these points cannot however count as "weak squares".

A weak square and a weak point are sometimes temporary features, given that most chess processes are dynamic and the conditions of the fight are constantly changing.

Let us now examine some systematic processes involving a struggle to create a weak square, conquer it and exploit the resulting advantages.

(ii) The "permanent" knight

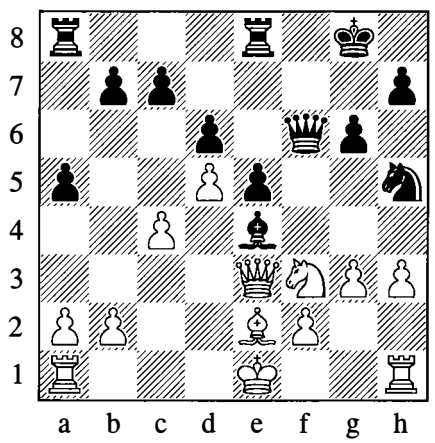
A knight occupying an unassailable position on a weak square in the centre or inside the opponent's camp acquires particularly formidable power. It is not without reason that we confer the expressive title of a "permanent" knight upon such a piece.

Let us look at some examples of a permanent knight deciding the outcome of the game.

The following position arose after 18.♕e3.

P. Izmailov – G. Kasparian

7th USSR Championship semi-final, Moscow 1931



18...♗xf3

Black could also play 18...♗f5. Then 19.g4? ♘f4, taking firm possession of the weak square, is bad for White. Instead he could reply 19.♘h4, aiming to meet 19...♘f4 with the bold 20.0–0–0. Or even better, he could play 19.0–0–0 at once, not allowing the knight to become active.

19.♕xf3

After capturing with the queen, White will need to play accurately to stop his opponent from acquiring a permanent knight by travelling the route ...♘g7-f5-d4. In the case of 19.♗xf3 ♘g7 20.♗e4, Black could hardly achieve this aim.

19...♕e7 20.♕e4 ♘g7 21.h4 ♘f5 22.h5?

A weak move, by which the knight's penetration to d4 is delayed for a short time only. Possibilities of counterplay could be obtained by 22.♗g4 ♘d4 23.0–0–0 or the quieter 23.0–0, preparing f2-f4.

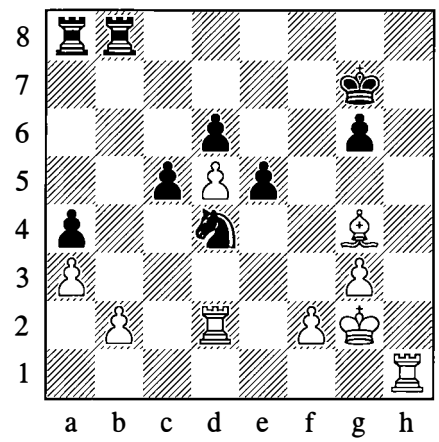
22...♕g5 23.♖d1 ♖f8 24.♕g4

White ought not to be heading for an endgame where Black, in the present circumstances, will find it much easier to exploit the advantages of his permanent knight.

24...♕xg4 25.♗xg4 ♘d4

The goal is attained!

26.♔f1 a4 27.a3 c5 28.♖d2 b5 29.cxb5 ♘xb5 30.♗e6† ♔g7 31.hxg6 hxg6 32.♔g2 ♘d4 33.♗g4 ♖fb8



34.♖e1 ♖a7 35.♗d1 ♔f6 36.f4 exf4 37.gxf4 ♖h8

Threatening a dangerous attack with ...♖ah7. White has to go in for further exchanges.

38.♖h1 ♖xh1 39.♔xh1 ♔f5 40.♖g2 ♔xf4 41.♖xg6 ♔e5 42.♖g5† ♔e4 43.♖h5 ♖a8 44.♔g1 ♖b8 45.♗xa4 ♖xb2 46.♔f1 ♔e3 47.♖h3† ♘f3
0–1

Even in the endgame the permanent knight took part in constructing a mating formation.

G. Levenfish – P. Dubinin

Ruy Lopez
9th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1934

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.♗b5 d6

By transposition, a variation of the Steinitz Defence with Black's knight on f6 has arisen. In this line Black obtains rather a cramped position, but practice has shown that White has difficulty utilizing the slight advantages he gains in the centre.

5.d4 exd4

An unjustified exchange. The right reply is 5...♗d7. It is true that Black will still have to take on d4 later, but this will occur when he has mobilized his main forces and prepared to castle.

6.♘xd4 ♗d7 7.♗xc6 bxc6

Black is concerned to preserve his light-squared bishop. In the event of 7...♗xc6 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.♕f3 ♕d7 10.h3 ♗e7 11.♗f4 0–0 12.0–0, with ♖ad1 and ♖fe1 to follow, it's hard for him to resist the concentrated force of all his opponent's pieces.

8.♕f3

This active queen sortie, with the potential threat of e4-e5, was only made possible by Black's 5th move.

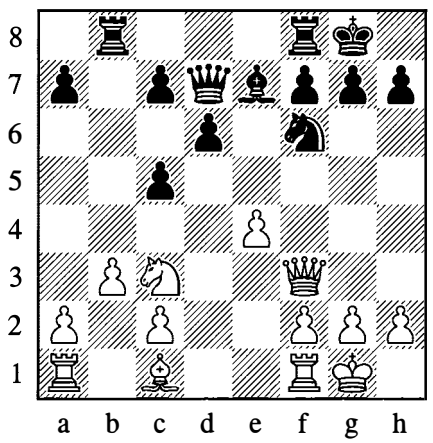
8...c5

If 8...♗e7, then 9.e5 dxe5 10.♘xc6 ♗xc6 11.♕xc6† ♘d7 12.♘d5 ♗d6 13.♗g5 f6 14.♗e3 0–0 15.0–0, and by following with ♖d1, White consolidates his gains in the centre. The squares c6 and d5 are real weaknesses.

9.♘f5 ♗xf5

Black has to exchange his light-squared bishop after all. The knight on f5 is very strongly placed, preventing Black from castling and consequently from mobilizing his forces. Driving the knight back with 9...g6 is unplayable in view of 10.♗g5 gxf5 11.e5 dxe5 12.♗xf6 e4 13.♘xe4. This variation demonstrates the strength of the queen positioned on f3 before Black has castled.

10.♕xf5 ♕d7 11.♕f3 ♖b8 12.0–0 ♗e7 13.b3 0–0



It is now essential for Black to keep the light squares under constant control. The chief role in fulfilling this task falls to his knight, and for that reason he must, if possible, avoid exchanging it for the enemy bishop. If that exchange comes about, the defensive duties will rest entirely on the pawns. For example to cover d5 Black will have to play ...c6, but that will seriously weaken the d6-point; while ...g6, to guard the f5-square, will lead to new

weaknesses being formed in Black's castled position. Viewed in this light, White's last move was already preparing the exchange of bishop for knight, and a useful move to prevent this would have been 13...h6.

14.♗g5

White pursues his course consistently. Admittedly he isn't yet threatening to take the knight, but after 15.♖ad1 the threat of the capture will be unpleasant.

14...♘d5?

Astonishingly, Black himself grants his opponent's wish!

If the knight is to be moved, the best choice is 14...♘e8. This obstructs the connection between Black's rooks, but after 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♘d5 ♕e6 he can nonetheless defend with some success, reserving the option of playing ...c6 and bringing his king's rook into play by means of ...f6 and ...♖f7. In this plan of defence the knight plays a major role, covering the points c7, d6 and g7.

There was also another possibility for offering resistance to White's plan – 14...h6, and if 15.♗h4 then 15...g5 16.♗g3 ♖fe8. The defect of this continuation is that to some extent it weakens the kingside, especially the f5-square; but in return, Black himself has an object of attack – the white e4-pawn.

15.♘xd5 ♗xg5 16.♕g3 ♗d8 17.♖ad1 f5?

Another mistake, which leads to White's knight on d5 becoming permanent. But Black's situation is difficult anyway. Thus 17...c6 is bad, as after 18.♘e3 the weakness of d6 is irreparable; but on the other hand, without ...c6 it's hard for Black to develop his game, as the knight on d5 is hampering all his actions.

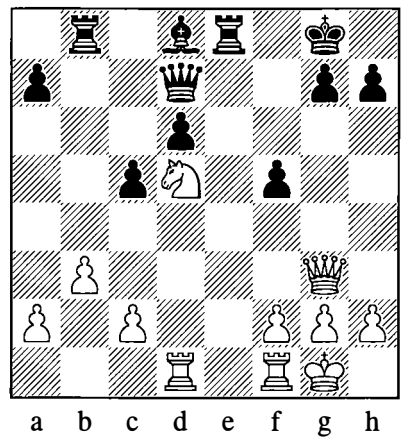
18.e5! ♖e8

After 18...c6 19.♘f6† ♗xf6 20.♖xd6 ♕c7 21.exf6 ♖xf6 22.♖xf6 the endgame would still be dismal for Black, but this was the lesser evil.

19.exd6 cxd6

White has successfully completed the first part of his plan: he has a permanent knight in the centre. This advantage is fully adequate to win the game.

The fight now enters its final phase, in which the advantage is exploited. Relying on the mighty position of his permanent knight, White works up an irresistible attack on the kingside.



20.♖fe1 ♖e6 21.♘f4 ♖xe1† 22.♖xe1 ♗a5 23.♘d5 ♗d8 24.h4 ♖b7 25.c4 ♔f7 26.♕f3 ♔g8 27.♕e2

Threatening to win the bishop with ♕e8†. The reply 27...♗xh4 fails to 28.♕h5.

27...g6

A more stubborn defence is 27...♗a5, driving the rook off the e-file.

28.h5 ♔f8 29.h6

Intending to continue with ♕b2. There were also other methods, for instance 29.♕b2 at once, or 29.hxg6 hxg6 30.♘f4.

29...♗g5

Black doesn't even stop the threat. His last hope was 29...♕f7, although after 30.♕d3 a5 31.♘f4 he still wouldn't be able to resist for long.

30.♕b2 ♔g8 31.f4 ♗d8 32.♘f6†

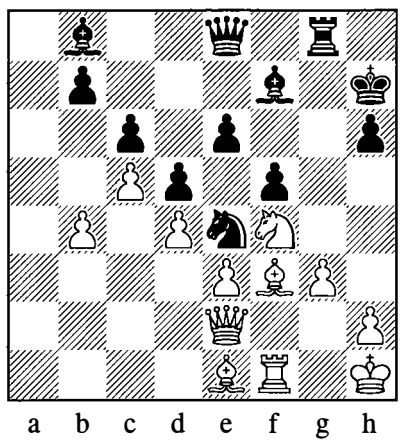
A beautiful solution! Of course, 32.♖e7 or 32.♘e7† would also have been adequate.

32...♗xf6 33.♕xf6 d5 34.cxd5
1–0

On 34...♖b6 White plays 35.♖e8†.

D. Bronstein – M. Botvinnik

World Championship (16), Moscow 1951



Without fathoming the specific aim of Black's last move 46...♕e7-e8, Bronstein played:

47.♕d3?

There followed:

47...♗xf4 48.exf4 ♗h5!

Bronstein now faced a difficult dilemma. In the event of 49.♗g2 ♕a8, the hostile pieces are threatening to invade on the a-file while the knight occupies a formidable central position on e4; but after 49.♗xe4 dxe4 50.♕a3 ♗f3† 51.♔g1 ♕h5 52.♕e3 ♕h3 53.♕f2 h5, the threat of ...h4 cannot be parried. Bronstein decided to allow Black a permanent knight, but tried to compensate for this, to some extent, by occupying the a-file.

49.♕a3 ♗xf3† 50.♖xf3 ♖g7

Defending the b7-pawn in case of any attacks by the queen. Black gains nothing from 50...♕a8, as White would not exchange queens himself but would play 51.♖d3, keeping to a waiting game. The tactical diversion 50...♕h5 also leads to nothing after 51.♔g2.

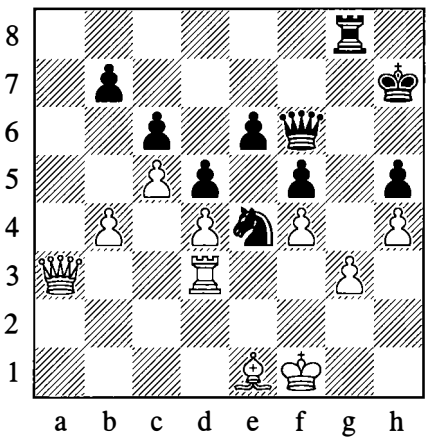
Black's plan is to create some more weak points in his opponent's camp (for instance by provoking h2-h4); then, by attacking them, to divert the white pieces from the defence of the a-file; and finally, to seize this important strategic invasion route himself. After that, with the support of the permanent knight, he should have little difficulty delivering the final blow.

51.♔g2 ♕d8 52.♔f1 ♕f6 53.♖d3 h5 54.h4

Of course White can't allow ...h4.

54...♖g8

With a view to ...♕g7, keeping the d4-pawn in his sights while threatening to penetrate via g4.



55.♖d1

This makes it somewhat easier for Black to exploit his positional plus, but what should White do? After 55.♕a7 ♕g7 White has an excellent resource in 56.b5! cxb5 57.♕b6, when 57...♖a8 is bad in view of 58.♕xe6.

A state of dynamic equilibrium would be maintained.

55...♕g7 56.♕f3 ♔h6 57.♔g2 ♖a8

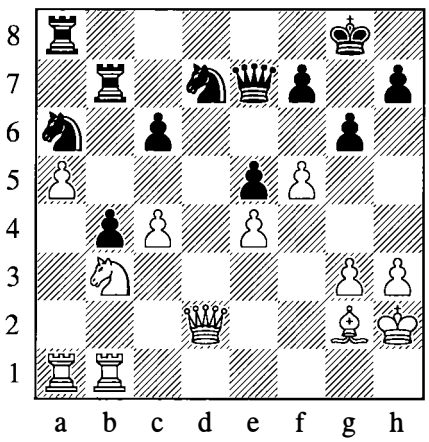
Black is now winning, although the game eventually ended in a draw after a gross error on Botvinnik's part.

...½–½

A permanent knight settled the fight in the following game.

E. Terpugov – D. Bronstein

19th USSR Championship, Moscow 1951



30.♖b2 ♘dc5 31.♘xc5 ♕xc5 32.f6?

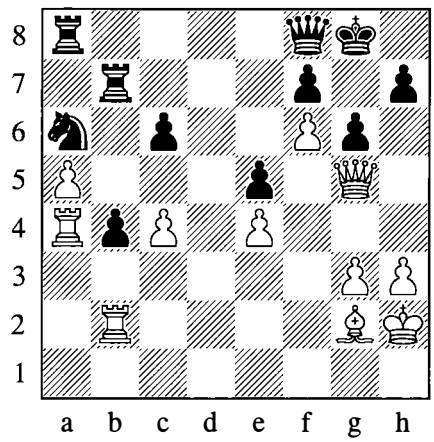
Not merely a useless move, seeing that ♕h6 can be parried by ...♕f8, but also a serious positional oversight. Clearly Black's dream is to bring a knight to the unassailable d4-square. With this last move White voluntarily relinquishes control of e6 which is a stepping-stone on the path to Black's goal. No wonder White soon suffers defeat.

And yet his position was not by any means bad. He had a number of active possibilities at his disposal. For instance an advance of the h-pawn was worth considering. On 32.h4 it would be dangerous to take the c4-pawn with the queen, in view of 33.♖c1. Meanwhile White aims for h4-h5, ♗h3 and ♖f1 with kingside pressure.

32...♘c7 33.♖a4 ♘a6 34.♕h6

Another useless lunge, which even tends to help Black carry out his plan. The rook on a4 is poorly placed (as we shall soon see, incidentally) and ought simply to have been moved back.

34...♕f8 35.♕g5



A queen exchange would simplify the struggle to Black's benefit: the f6-pawn would be very weak, and the plan of invading on d4 would be even easier to execute. White naturally tries to complicate matters on the kingside as far as he can.

35...♘c5!

The bad placing of White's rook on a4 makes itself felt. It has to go right back "home", since 36.♖axb4 ♖xb4 37.♖xb4 loses the exchange to 37...♘xe4.

36.♖a1 h6 37.♕e3

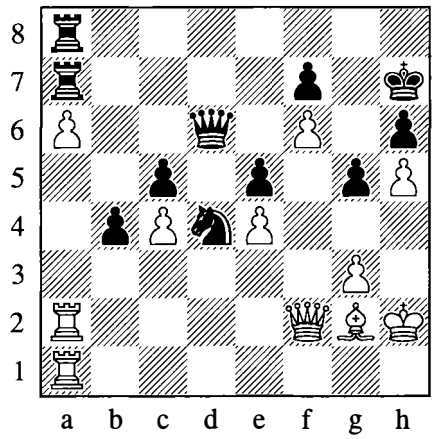
Of course not 37.♕xe5 in view of 37...♘d3.

37...♔h7 38.♖d2 ♘e6 39.a6 ♖ba7 40.♖da2 c5 41.h4 ♕d6

White has trouble with his a6-pawn for good measure.

42.h5 g5 43.♕f2 ♘d4

A knight that every chess player dreams of.



44.♖d2 ♔g8

After 45...♖xa6 46.♖xa6 Black wants to recapture on a6 with his rook; in the present circumstances 46...♖xa6 would fail to 47.♖xd4 followed by ♕f5† and ♕c8†, drawing.

45.♖da2

White sealed this move, but then resigned without resuming. This was the right decision, as after 45...♖xa6 the b-pawn with the support of the permanent knight will have no trouble reaching White's first rank.

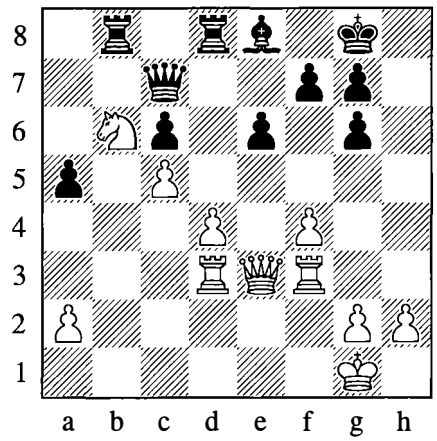
0–1

(iii) Weak squares on the sixth (third) rank

The substantial weakness of squares on the sixth (third) rank creates one of the most tempting objectives for a plan. Establishing a knight or bishop on these squares is usually just as decisive a positional gain as acquiring a permanent knight. Sometimes these ideas are combined. It is with just such an example that we will begin.

H. Pillsbury – M. Chigorin

Vienna 1898



The white knight has established itself on the weak b6-square. Under cover of this piece, White has conceived a plan for attacking the a5-pawn. Once that pawn falls, the passed white a-pawn ought to speak its weighty word.

However, Pillsbury headed towards this goal in too straightforward a manner with:

29.♖a3

Whereupon Chigorin immediately sacrificed the exchange as a way of eliminating the permanent knight.

29...♖xb6! 30.cxb6 ♕xb6

Of course White has a material plus, but thanks to the vulnerability of the d4-pawn (a weak point!), Black obtains distinct counter-chances.

The game continued:

31.♖f1 ♖xd4

This doesn't succeed in winning a pawn, as White's reply shows.

32.♖xa5 c5 33.♖a8 ♔f8 34.♕h3 ♔e7 35.♕h4† f6 36.♕h8 ♖d8 37.♕xg7† ♗f7 38.♖xd8 c4† 39.♔h1 ♕xd8 40.♖b1?

A cocksure move that even leads to defeat. The correct 40.♕h6, bringing the queen back to deal with the passed c-pawn, would retain good winning chances.

40...c3!

White will now have to give up his rook for this pawn. Pillsbury resigned a few moves later.

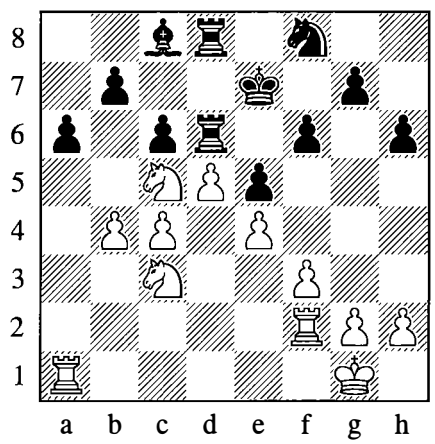
...0–1

Returning to the diagram position, we must once again emphasize the mighty role played by the knight on b6. This factor is probably quite sufficient for victory. Only instead of 29.♖a3, White should play 29.♕e5, and if 29...♕a7 then 30.♖b3, fortifying the knight's outpost.

In the following instructive example, a devastating foray onto the sixth rank was undertaken by both knights.

P. Romanovsky – A. Smorodsky

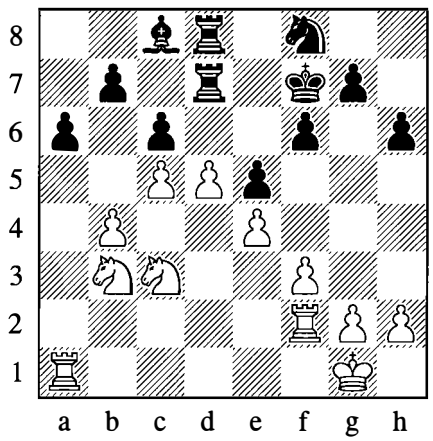
3rd USSR Championship, Moscow 1924



White is on the attack. His pawn group has already pressed forward to the fifth rank and is severely cramping Black. The white c-pawn can advance to c5, but is it worthwhile for the knight to abandon that square? It is, after all, a weak square located inside the enemy camp, and the knight together with the pawns is exerting serious pressure on the centre and queenside. Thus, the rook on d6 is deprived of any moves at all, and ...♘d7 is also unplayable in view of ♘e6 and c4-c5. The black bishop is tied to the b7-pawn, and ...b6 allows ♘xa6.

White undoubtedly has various paths at his disposal for exploiting his advantage. He settles on a plan of invading the sixth rank with his knights – on the squares d6 and b6. The knight on c5 therefore leaves its strong position in order to penetrate still more deeply into the hostile camp.

31.♘b3 ♔f7 32.c5 ♖6d7



At this point some players would be tempted to play 33.d6, but it merely helps Black to free himself. He continues with 33...♔e8 and ...♖f7, after which the e6-square becomes a splendid springboard for his bishop and knight. Moreover by "nailing down" the d6-square with his pawn, White is depriving one of his own knights of a superb outpost.

33.♘a5

The knight heads for d6 via c4.

33...♖c7 34.♖d1 h5

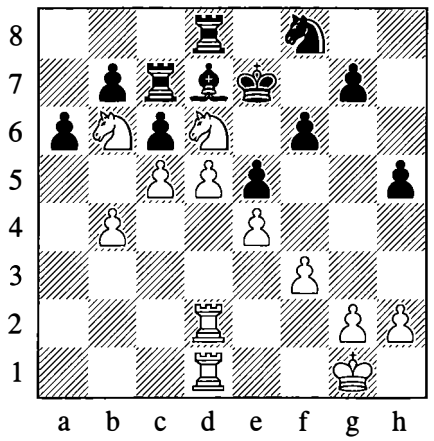
Black is helpless.

35.♖fd2 ♖cd7 36.♘a4

The start of the victorious attack with the knights.

36...♔e8 37.♘b6 ♖c7 38.♘c4 ♗d7 39.♘d6† ♔e7

The goal is attained. The white cavalry has squeezed the entire hostile army into a vice – a good example of how the strength of knights increases when they land on weak squares in the opposing camp.



40.♘b5!

With this move, thanks to the threat of d5-d6†, White wins at least the exchange while keeping the initiative. Further resistance on Black's part is pointless, and he soon resigned.
...1–0

Let us also examine the following game.

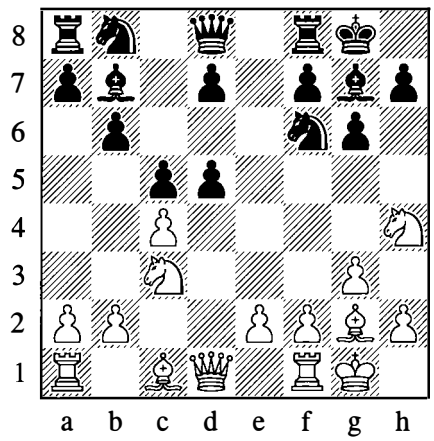
A. Alekhine – J.R. Capablanca

Queen's Indian Defence
New York 1927

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 c5 6.d5

This aggressive continuation was recommended in his day by Rubinstein. It requires very accurate defence on Black's part. He is obliged to take the pawn to avoid difficulties in developing his queenside, but the consequence is an unpleasant pin against his own pawn on d5. Utilizing this pin, White subsequently tries to turn the d5-square into an outpost for his pieces. This entire opening variation leads to a tense, sharp struggle; in the present game, the first exchange of pieces only occurs 17 moves later.

6...exd5 7.♘h4 g6 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.0–0 0–0



10.♗f4

An interesting plan, introduced by Alekhine with the aim of exploiting the somewhat weak d6-point. For example after 10...d6 11.cxd5, Black cannot immediately develop his queen's knight on d7; while after 11...♘h5 his influence on the centre is weakened, and this knight itself is not particularly well placed.

More often White has played 10.cxd5, followed by a pawn offensive in the centre (e2-e4 and f2-f4).

10...d6 11.cxd5 ♘h5 12.♗d2

Evidently White's motive in retreating to d2 was to reserve the option of a central pawn advance, specifically with e2-e4. Actually, however, in a mere four moves' time he will judge it necessary to transfer the bishop to e3,

although his pawn will still be on e2. There are also other reasons why 12.♗e3 would be more to the point. Black cannot go into action on the queenside without playing ...c4, but if the bishop were on e3 that move would give White the opportunity to centralize it with ♗d4.

12...♘d7 13.f4?

This move deserves condemnation not so much in its own right – for with a logical follow-up the consequences need not have been particularly grave – as rather because it initiates a faulty plan. It is a mystery why White refrained from playing 13.e4 with a threat of ♘f5, and *following* with f2-f4 in answer to 13...♘hf6.

13...a6

Black's plan becomes clear: with the support of the excellently placed bishop on g7, he aims to undertake a large-scale pawn offensive on the queenside.

14.♗f3

White prompts the black knight to return to a better position. A more consistent course was 14.a4 followed by e2-e4 – or even 14.e4 at once, threatening ♘f5. In that case Black would probably have played ...♘hf6 of his own accord.

14...♘hf6 15.a4?

This prevents ...b5 but leads to a palpable weakening of the queenside, which Black later succeeds in utilizing.

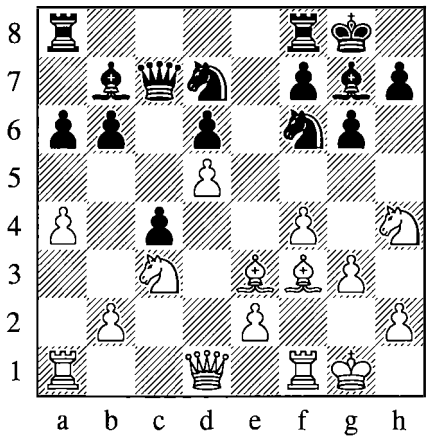
By continuing 15.e4, White could have contended for the initiative, although after 15...b5 16.♕c2 c4 intending ...♘c5-d3, Black's position is still preferable.

15...c4

This move fixes the weakness on b3, and also d3 if White should move his e-pawn. Furthermore Black's knight has a direct path to these squares via c5.

16.♗e3 ♕c7

Aiming to recapture with the queen in the event of 17...♘c5 18.♗xc5. Black's pieces are acting most harmoniously; his rooks are going to occupy a dominant position on the e-file, and the white pawn on d5 is weak. Concluding that his position is bad, White undertakes a speculative attack on the kingside.

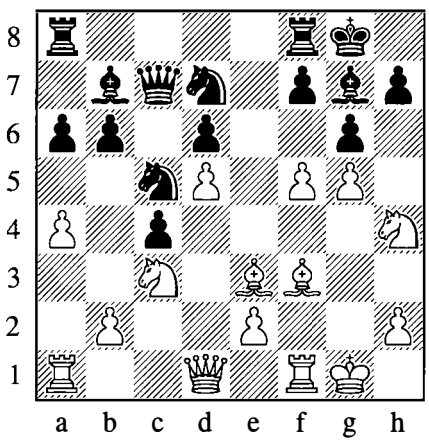


17.g4

If White defends passively with 17.♕c2 ♘c5 18.♖ad1 ♖fe8 19.♗f2, then Black retains a considerable plus by means of 19...♗c8, followed by either ...♘g4, or ...♗d7 and ...b5.

A more effective way of combating Black's plans is the break with 17.b3.

17...♘c5 18.g5 ♘fd7 19.f5?



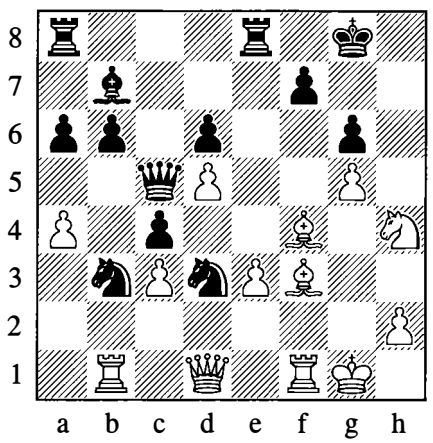
This grants Black one more base for his pieces – the e5-square – while bringing White no gains.

We know that on the day of this encounter with Capablanca, the then holder of the World Championship title, Alekhine displayed extreme nervousness, and that is how his play should probably be explained. A chess player's state of mind and even his character have, after all, an intimate bearing on the style and quality of his play.

19...♖fe8 20.♗f4 ♗e5 21.♗g4 ♘b3 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♖b1 ♗xc3 24.bxc3 ♕c5† 25.e3

Of course not 25.♔g2 or 25.♔h1, whereupon the d5-pawn would be taken with check; but now the d3-square is left weak, and Black takes immediate advantage of this.

25...♘e5 26.♗f3 ♘d3!



There is no hurry to take the pawn. Supported by their pawn on c4, the knights have parachuted to d3 and b3 in picturesque style. This elegant scenario repeats the pattern that we saw in our previous example, only in this case the background, in other words the positional setting, is structurally more complex and colourful.

White is compelled to clear up the situation at any cost, but owing to the exposed position of his king he cannot escape major losses in the crisis that now begins.

27.♔h1 ♗xd5 28.♖xb3 ♘xf4 29.♖b1 ♖xe3 30.♘g2 ♖xf3! 31.♖xf3 ♘xg2 32.♔xg2 ♖e8 33.♔f1 ♗xf3 34.♕xf3 ♕xg5 35.♖e1

Not 35.♖xb6 on account of 35...♕c1† and 36...♕d2†.

35...♖xe1†

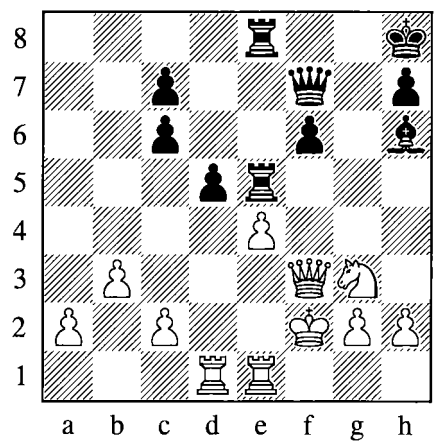
Even in a queen ending, resistance with three pawns down is useless. White resigned on move 42.

...0–1

If a bishop penetrates to the third (sixth) rank and establishes itself there – especially on e6 or d6 (e3 or d3) – this too is a significant and sometimes even decisive positional asset. The following game may serve as a classic example of play on these lines. Lasker, with Black, had mishandled the opening and lost a pawn; his defeat seemed inevitable. Eventually, though, thanks to some flabby play by his opponent, he managed to start a counter-action in the centre, revolving round White's isolated pawn on e4. After 24...d5 the following position was reached.

S. Tarrasch – Em. Lasker

World Championship (2), Dusseldorf/Munich 1908



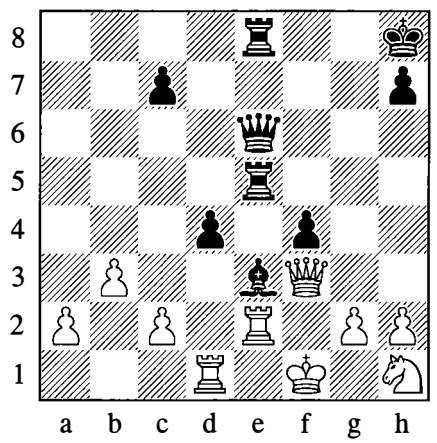
Black is threatening the simple 25...♕g6. The strongest continuation for White at this point is 25.♘f5, putting the knight on a splendid square. White is ready to answer 25...dxe4 with 26.♘xh6; or if 25...♗f8 then for instance 26.exd5 ♗c5† 27.♔f1 ♕g6 28.♖xe5 ♖xe5 29.g4, and it's difficult for Black to continue the attack.

Tarrasch, however, captured on d5 at once, exposing the e3-square which Lasker did not fail to utilize most energetically.

25.exd5? ♗e3†! 26.♔f1 cxd5 27.♖d3

White underestimates the role of the bishop on e3. Here again he should have played 27.♘f5, and after 27...d4 28.♘xe3 dxe3 29.♖e2, Black's passed pawn is firmly blockaded and White has every reason to play for the win.

27...♕e6 28.♖e2 f5 29.♘h1 f4 30.♖d1 d4



The power of the bishop now appears in its full splendour. Under its cover, and with its cooperation, Black's attack proceeds to its goal swiftly and without any hindrance.

31.♘f2 ♕a6 32.♘d3

By 32.♔g1 followed by ♔h1, securing the defence of the kingside pawns, White could make stubborn resistance possible.

32...♖g5 33.♖a1 ♕h6 34.♔e1

On 34.h3 Black has the decisive 34...♖g3 35.♕d5 f3.

34...♕xh2 35.♔d1 ♕g1† 36.♘e1

Or 36.♖e1 ♕xg2.

36...♖ge5 37.♕c6 ♖5e6 38.♕xc7 ♖8e7 39.♕d8†?

After 39.♕c8† there would be plenty of fight still ahead; the attack on the e6-rook prevents the winning line seen in the game.

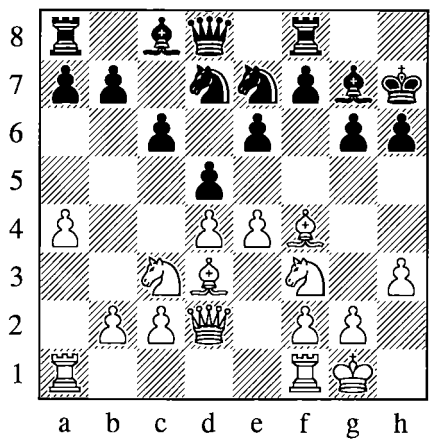
39.♔g7 40.a4 f3 41.gxf3 ♗g5

After 42.♖xe6 ♖xe6 43.♕a5 ♗h4 White suffers great material losses.

0–1

A. Alekhine – V. Mikenas

Folkestone Olympiad 1933



Black has a weak square on d6, which the enemy bishop is clearly trying to reach. Ignoring this threat, however, Mikenas continued:

12...a6

He evidently had in mind an attack on the centre with ...c5, and was preventing a knight incursion to b5 in reply.

Alekhine's note to 12...a6 is interesting: "Black does not realize that the d6-square has to be protected at all costs. From now on, the dominating position of White's queen's bishop will alone prove sufficient to decide the battle." In Alekhine's view it was essential to play 12...♘f6 and then ...♘e8.

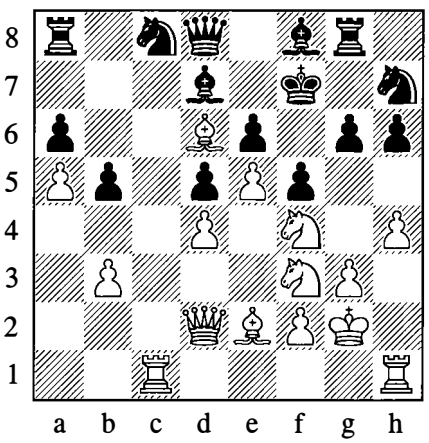
13.♗d6 f5

This move too, facilitating the consolidation of White's bishop on d6, testifies to Black's false appraisal of the position. It would still have been useful to carry out the manoeuvre ...♘f6-e8, for example 13...♘f6 14.e5 ♘e8 15.♗a3 ♖g8 16.h4 ♘f5 – although Black's situation would still remain difficult, thanks to the inactivity of his queenside.

14.e5 ♖g8 15.h4 b6

So that after 16...♘f8 17.♕g5 he can reply 17...♖a7.

16.♘e2 ♘f8 17.a5 b5 18.g3 ♖h8 19.♔g2 ♔g8 20.♖h1 ♔f7 21.♘f4 ♖g8 22.b3 ♘h7 23.c4 ♗d7 24.♖ac1 ♗f8 25.♗e2 ♘c8 26.cxd5 cxd5



27.♗xf8

After the bishop exchange, there will be a number of weak dark squares in the Black camp: b6, f6, and especially c5. The last-named will serve as a splendid base for the white pieces until the end of the game. Moreover the white rooks and queen will soon seize the c-file which will provide an invasion route into the enemy camp. To a significant extent, all these gains were the result of the powerful positional pressure exerted for the space of 13 moves by the bishop on d6. It not only cramped the opponent and supplied an important factor in developing White's initiative; it also forced Black into a series of actions that led to a weakening of his position.

As we shall presently be turning to the role played by open files in a plan, we will now give the rest of this game by way of a brief preface to that important strategic theme:

27...♘xf8 28.♖c5

In examining the question of weak squares we have paid special attention to the role of the bishop and knight, but we now see that the other pieces too – the rook, the queen, and in the endgame even the king – can decisively influence the course of the fight by settling on a weak point.

28...♘a7 29.♘d3 ♔g7 30.♖hc1 ♖c8 31.♖xc8 ♗xc8 32.♕c3 ♔h7 33.♕c5

The invasion begins. Black is still able to parry a threat or two, but he cannot oppose White's offensive along the c-file with a planned defence.

33...♖g7 34.♕b6! ♕e7 35.♘c5 g5 36.hxg5 hxg5 37.♘e1

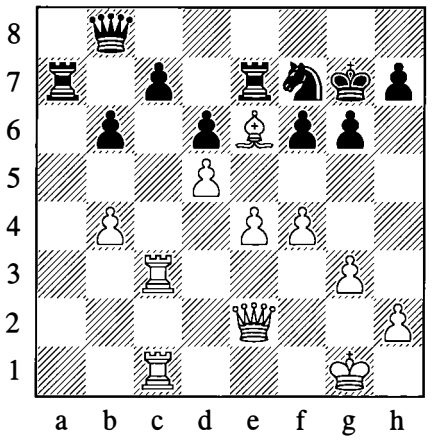
And Black soon resigned.

...1–0

Let us look at one more example of a bishop penetrating to the sixth rank inside the enemy camp.

R. Kholmov – I. Livshin

21st USSR Championship, Kiev 1954



In the arrangement of White's pieces, two important positional features call for attention: the bishop has established itself on the weak e6-square, while on the c-file the white rooks are attacking the backward pawn – and Black's main forces are tied to its defence. Were it not for this last circumstance, Black could himself utilize the open a-file to invade the enemy camp and compensate in some measure for the powerful placing of the bishop on e6.

41.b5

Stopping an advance of the c-pawn once and for all.

41...♕e8

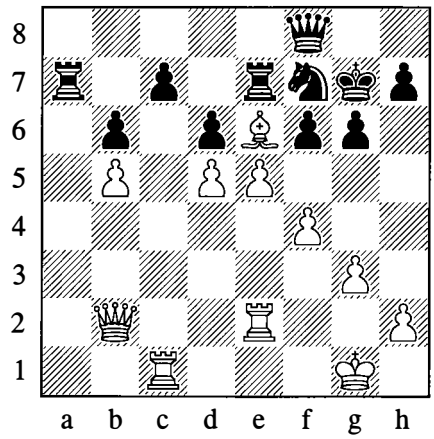
41...♘d8 is a better defence. Then 42.e5 ♘xe6 43.exd6 cxd6 44.dxe6 may look promising for White, with his possession of the c-file and the passed pawn on e6, but Black obtains quite good counterplay with 44...♕a8.

A stronger line for White is 42.f5, but even then, after the knight goes back to f7, it won't be so simple for him to breach his opponent's defence.

42.♕b2 ♕f8 43.♖e3 ♕a8 44.♖e2

Now Black cannot defend against the e4-e5 break, which derives its strength from the position of the bishop on e6.

44...♕f8 45.e5



45...♘d8

The main variation of the breakthrough goes: 45...dxe5 46.fxe5 ♘xe5 47.♖xe5 fxe5 48.♖f1 ♕d8 49.♕xe5† ♔h6 50.♕f4† ♔g7 51.♕f6† ♔h6 52.♖f4 and the mate threats are unanswerable.

46.exd6 cxd6 47.♕d4 ♖b7 48.g4 ♖e8 49.g5 ♖be7 50.f5

The opening of the kingside files makes Black's resistance useless.

50...♖b7 51.♖f1 ♔h8 52.gxf6 ♘f7 53.fxg6 hxg6 54.♖g2 ♕h6 55.♖g3 ♔g8 56.♕d3 1–0

In the final position the bishop on e6 plays first fiddle, as it did throughout the whole course of the attack.

(iv) A few conclusions

Summing up all that has been said about weak squares, we may conclude first of all that they are a positional element which can significantly enhance the power of the pieces (above all the

bishop or knight), sometimes to a sufficient extent to decide the outcome of the game.

This conclusion takes us directly to the issue of the relative power of the pieces, which must be assessed according to the role they fill in the specific position on the board.

As a further conclusion, we may state the factors that contribute to the weakening of a square; they are divided into two categories, (1) structural and (2) positional.

Factors of the structural type are bound up with the pawn configuration. A square that you cannot attack with pawns can be regarded as structurally weakened. However, it needs to be stressed once again that the weakness of such a square is only potential. It becomes a real weakness only when the positional possibility arises for your opponent to utilize this square as a base for his pieces. Your lack of a bishop on the colour of the weakened square, or of a knight to guard the latter, must also be counted among the relevant structural factors; neither of these factors by itself makes the square genuinely weak.

When a bishop is developed on the flank (for example on g2 for White), the pawn configuration e3-f2-g3-h2 often comes about, in which case the squares f3 and h3 are structurally weakened – but this in no way prevents modern theory from recommending the "fianchetto" of bishops in a great many openings.

From this it is clear that structural weaknesses should not be feared as such – otherwise we would be denying ourselves the possibility of implementing many an active game plan. All the same, when engaged in tentative manoeuvring, it is useful to avoid weaknesses even of the "structural" kind if they lack due motives and justification.

(C) Open Lines

The lines of squares we recognize on the chessboard are of three types: files, ranks and diagonals. The files serve as paths for the major pieces to break into the enemy camp. The ranks serve to transfer those pieces from one flank to another, or, if they have broken through, to deliver flank attacks; the diagonals serve as thoroughfares for the bishops and queens.

Let us begin with the concerted action of the queen and bishop, which is exercised when the two pieces are doubled on an open diagonal, the long one or an adjacent one; or else when they are attacking weakened points in the opponent's camp from different directions.

In some openings White fairly quickly achieves the harmonious activity of these pieces in one or other of its forms. As an example we may take the following variation of the Vienna Game:

1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗c4 ♘xe4 4.♕h5

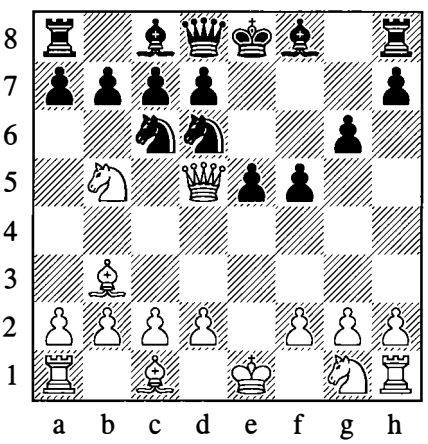
The first attack against f7 from two directions.

4...♘d6 5.♗b3 ♘c6 6.♘b5 g6 7.♕f3

The second combined strike at f7, with the queen operating on the file this time.

7...f5 8.♕d5

Doubling on the a2-g8 diagonal.



As is well known, Black now has to sacrifice

the exchange in order to parry White's energetic attack against f7.

8...♕e7

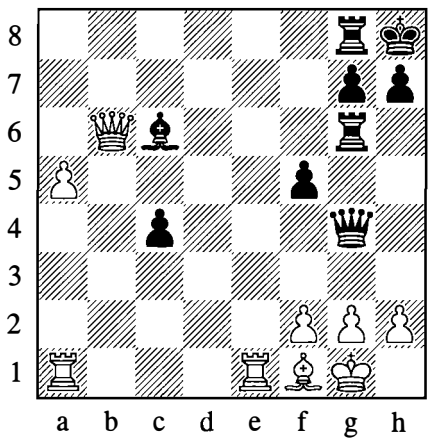
It is true that this gives Black a dangerous initiative, fully compensating for the lost material – as practical experience shows.

White also quickly mounts an attack along the a2-g8 diagonal against f7 in a number of variations of the Evans Gambit, such as the following: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.b4 ♗xb4 5.c3 ♗a5 6.d4 d6 7.♕b3. At this point Black cannot play either 7...♕e7 or 7...♕f6, on account of 8.d5 winning a piece. The correct reply is 7...♕d7, which allows him to maintain good defensive resources.

In the middlegame, the harmonious operation of queen and bishop finds its most effective expression in an attack on the long diagonal, aimed at creating mate threats to the opponent's king. Let us look at some instructive illustrations of this theme.

A. Alekhine – S. Tartakower

Pistyan 1922



Ten moves ago Black was already organizing dangerous pressure on the long diagonal against the g2-pawn, and now that he has also brought up his rook to join the attack from g6, he has set White some difficult problems. At the present moment he threatens the lethal stroke 31...♗xg2.

Obviously 31.g3 is unplayable owing to 31...♕f3.

31.♖a3 (with a view to answering 31...♗xg2 with 32.♖g3) can be simply met by 31...f4, and if 32.h3 then 32...♕f5, forcing White to settle for the loss of a pawn after 33.f3 ♗xf3.

Giving up a pawn immediately with 31.f3 is the best defence. After 31...♗xf3 32.♕f2 ♗e4 the struggle might continue in the following interesting manner: 33.a6 c3 34.a7 c2 35.g3, and it still isn't clear who is better.

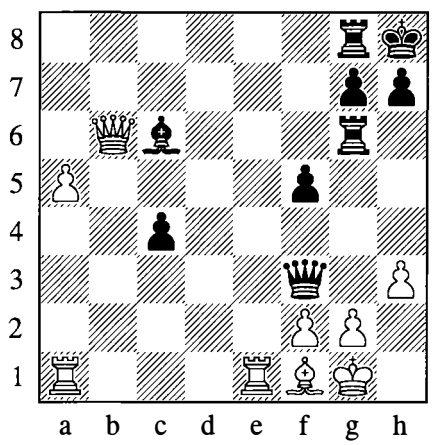
Alekhine played:

31.h3

This move contains a small trap. On 31...♕xh3 White wins with 32.♕xc6!; while after 31...♕g5, the continuation 32.♕e3 f4 33.♕e5 enables him to offer stubborn resistance.

Tartakower, however, had prepared a murderous rejoinder:

31...♕f3



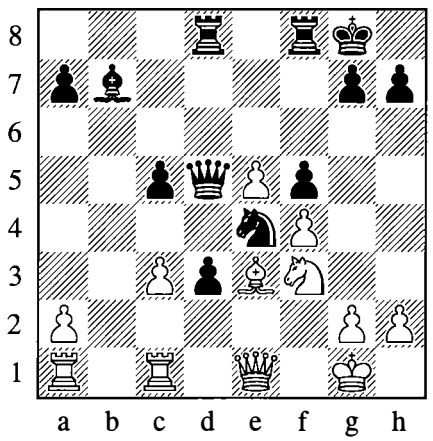
The attack on g2 cannot be parried. On 32.♖e3, Black mates in three moves: 32...♖xg2† 33.♔h1 ♖g1† 34.♔xg1 ♕h1# This variation vividly illustrates the dangers lurking when a queen and bishop, with the queen in front, are doubled on the long diagonal against the opponent's castled position.

0–1

The idea of attacking the king's position by doubling the queen and bishop on the long diagonal came to the fore as a creative device in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was Chigorin, in fact, who pioneered it. In a number of his games we find attacks constructed on this basis.

Schmidt – M. Chigorin

St Petersburg 1877



Black's last move was 25...♕c4-d5. The struggle developed as follows:

26.♖d1 g5! 27.fxg5 f4 28.c4

White has perceived the danger, and by sacrificing a pawn he wishes to gain a tempo for the defence.

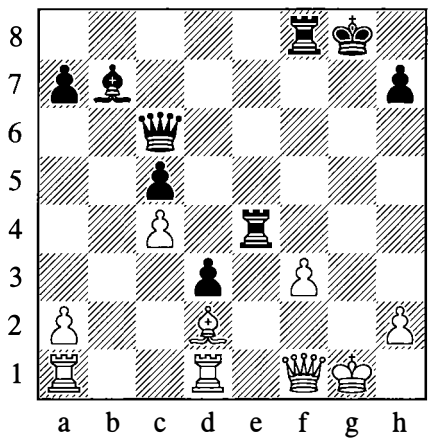
28...♕c6!

28...♕xc4 would be met by 29.♗d2 ♕d5 30.h4, although in this case too, Black retains sufficient advantage to win.

29.♗d2 ♘xg5 30.♘h4 ♖d4 31.♗c3 ♖e4 32.♕f1 f3

The decisive breakthrough to the g2-point.

33.♘xf3 ♘xf3† 34.gxf3



34...♖g4†!

The apotheosis of Black's devastating action with his forces on the diagonal. On 35.♔f2, Black mates by ♕xf3† and ♖e4†. But mate is inevitable by now in any case.

35.♔h1 ♕xf3† 36.♕xf3 ♗xf3#

Chigorin subtly built up a similar kind of destructive attack in the following game, which we will give in full.

I. Gunsberg – M. Chigorin

Two Knights Defence
Havana (6) 1890

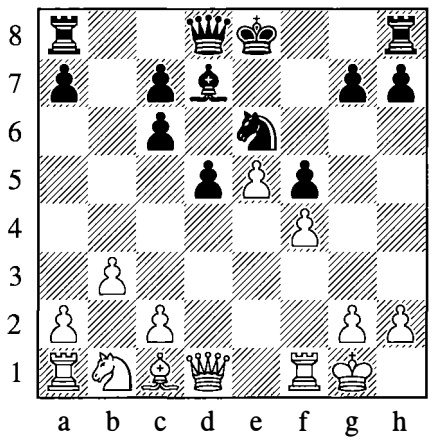
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.0–0 ♘xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♗b5 ♗d7 7.♗xc6 bxc6 8.♘xe5 ♗d6 9.f3

A move which only appears to reckon with the immediate retreat of the knight. Instead

White could have made castling difficult for Black by playing 9.♘xd7 ♕xd7 10.f3 ♘f6 11.♖e1† ♗e7 12.♕e2, when 12...♔f8 is necessary. With this in mind, on the previous move Black would have done better to develop his bishop on e7. After failing to make use of the opportunity, White comes away with the worse game.

9...♗xe5 10.dxe5 ♘c5 11.b3 ♘e6 12.f4 f5

A blockading knight stationed on e6 (e3 for White) was employed by Chigorin in numerous games. This excellent positional idea fully deserves to be called by his name.



13.♗a3 ♕h4 14.♘d2

Better is 14.♕f3, followed by developing the knight on c3.

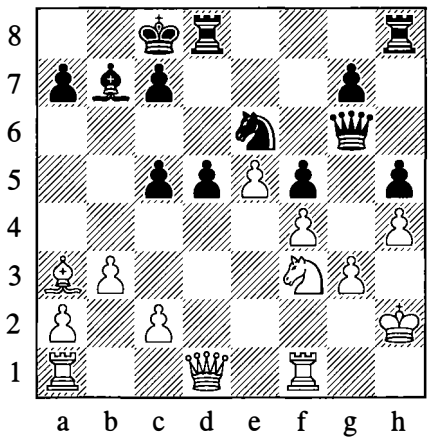
14...h5

After 14...♘xf4 15.e6! White would acquire a dangerous initiative.

15.g3 ♕g4 16.♔g2 c5 17.h3 ♕g6 18.♔h2 0–0–0

A stronger line is 18...h4 19.g4 0–0 20.g5 with complex play. After the move in the game, White could have obtained a good position with 19.♘f3, directing the knight to h4.

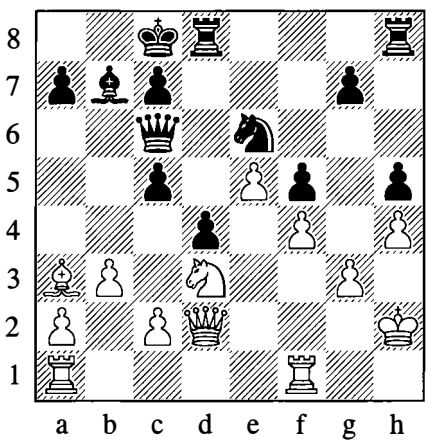
19.h4 ♗c6 20.♘f3 ♗b7!



The positional manoeuvre with the bishop contains the covert idea of an attack on the long diagonal.

21.♕d2 d4 22.♘e1 ♕e8 23.♘d3 ♕c6

The doubling is achieved. The mighty position of the bishop and queen will serve as the foundation for the decisive attack that develops move by move.



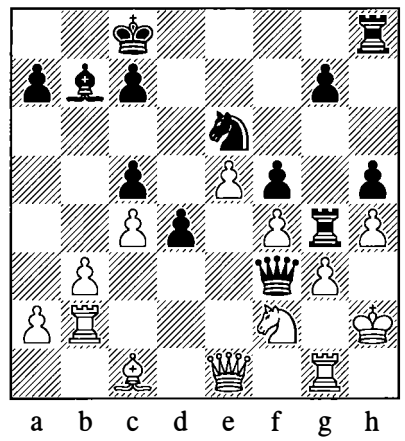
24.♖f2 ♖dg8 25.♖af1 ♖h6 26.♕a5 ♕b6 27.♕e1

Of course the queen exchange would improve Black's pawn structure, making it more compact. White should nonetheless have gone in for this, as the "lesser evil".

27...♖g6 28.c4 ♖g4 29.♗c1 ♕c6 30.♖g1

♖h8 31.♖b2 ♕f3 32.♘f2

32.♕e2 can be met by 32...♖xg3. Taking this variation further with 33.♕xf3 ♖xf3 34.♘e1 ♖c3 35.♗d2, we see that the rook is trapped, but thanks to the activity of his pieces, Black will still have a good game in the ending the exchange down.



32...g5! 33.♘xg4

33.fxg5 looks extremely risky, but there is an ingenious defensive resource: 33.fxg5 f4 34.♗xf4 ♘xf4 (34...hxg4 35.♖gg2 ♘xg5 36.♔g1 ♕xg2† 37.♖xg2 ♘f3† and Black wins) 35.♕d1! and White can still resist.

33...hxg4 34.♕f1

Defending the h3-square, which is where Black was threatening to deliver mate after ...♖xh4†.

34...♖xh4†!

Black plays this all the same! He wins the queen while the attack still continues.

35.gxh4 g3† 36.♖xg3 ♕xf1 37.♖g1 ♕f3 38.fxg5 ♘f4 39.♗xf4 ♕xf4† 40.♔h3 ♗f3 41.♖f2

If 41.g6, then 41...♗g4† 42.♔g2 ♕f3† and 43...♕h3#.

41...♗g4† 42.♔g2 ♕e4†

He could also win with 42...♗h3†.

43.♔h2 ♕e3 44.♖gg2 d3 45.g6 ♕xe5† 46.♖g3 ♕d4 47.♖fg2 ♕f6

And on move 56 Gunsberg resigned, which he could have done much earlier.

...0–1

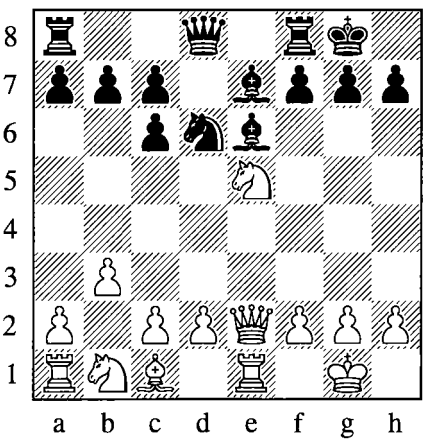
The following game, in which Black's concluding attack was based on the harmonious action of his queen and bishop, is also highly instructive.

W. John – H. Süchting

Ruy Lopez
Coburg 1904

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0–0 ♘xe4 5.♖e1 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.♘xe5 ♗e7 8.♕e2 ♗e6 9.b3 0–0

It's hard to say whether Black is sacrificing a pawn or losing it through an oversight. Either way, he obtains compensation for it in the form of development and the active placing of his pieces.



10.♘xf7 ♗xf7 11.♕xe7 ♕c8

In view of the threatened ...♖e8 White has to lose time withdrawing his queen, while his queenside is in cold storage. The initiative is firmly in Black's hands.

12.♕g5

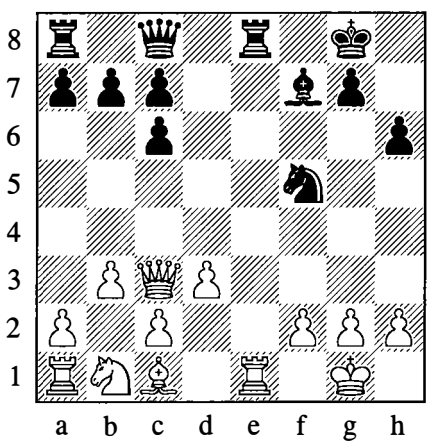
This game was the subject of numerous investigations at the time, but the commentators reached no agreement in their judgements and analyses. At this stage, for example, retreating the queen to h4 was recommended, with reference to the following line: 12.♕h4 ♘f5 13.♕f4 ♗d5 14.♗b2 ♘d6 15.♕g5 ♖f7 16.♘c3, and White – one commentator concluded – has an extra pawn and the better position. That may be true, but in this variation Black made a series of moves that were aimless – ...♗d5, ...♘d6 and to some extent even 12...♘f5, seeing that the knight went back to d6 just two moves later.

And yet after 12...♖e8 Black maintains a dangerous initiative in both the following cases: 13.♖xe8† ♕xe8 14.♔f1 ♕e5 15.♘c3 ♖e8 16.♗b2 ♘f5 (or 16.f3 ♘f5), and 13.♖f1 ♖e4.

The queen move to g5 has quite a few arguments in its favour. Thus, in the variation 12...♖e8 13.♖xe8† ♕xe8 14.♔f1 Black no longer has ...♕e5 available, while White is threatening to play ♗b2 with tempo.

12...h6 13.♕g3 ♘f5 14.♕c3 ♖e8 15.d3

On 15.♖f1 Black has 15...♗d5 16.♗b2 ♖e6, followed by ...♖g6.



15...♘d4

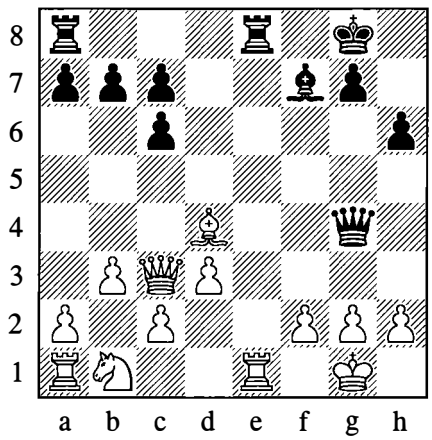
This fearsome move earned almost universal approval. And yet the quick success it brought was due to White's errors in defence.

An alternative solution was 15...♗d5 (with the threat of ...♘h4). For example on 16.f3, Black has 16...♕d8 17.♗d5 ♕g5 with compensation for the pawn.

16.♗e3 ♕g4 17.♗xd4

Another possibility of defence was 17.h3, whereupon 17...♘f3† must be acknowledged as Black's strongest continuation. After 18.♔f1 he evidently has to be content with drawing by 18...♘h2†, since in the event of 18...♕h5 19.gxf3 ♕xf3 20.♘d2 ♕xh3† 21.♔e2 ♖xe3† 22.fxe3 ♗h5† 23.♘f3 White remains with the exchange for a pawn while his king finds refuge on b2.

After 18...♘h2† White for his part cannot evade the draw by 19.♔g1 ♘f3† 20.♔h1, as Black continues 20...♕h5 21.gxf3 ♕xh3† 22.♔g1 ♖e6, and the threat of ...♖g6† is decisive.



17...♗d5!

A crafty intermediate move.

17...♕xd4 does not achieve anything in view of 18.♖xe8† ♖xe8 19.h3! or 18.♖c1!.

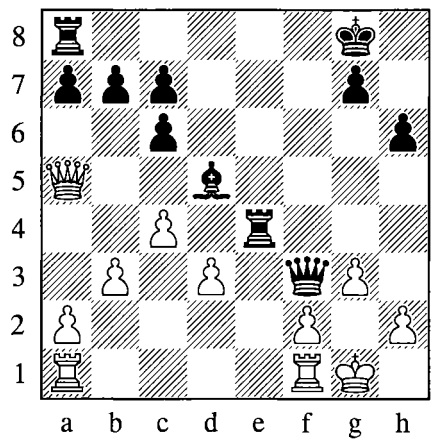
18.g3 ♕xd4!

Not 18...♕f3 on account of 19.♖e4.

19.♖f1 ♕g4 20.♘d2 ♖e2 21.♘e4?

This is the move that led quickly to disaster. It should have been played only after 21.♖ae1 ♖ae8 (21...♖xd2 22.♕xd2 ♕f3 23.♖e4), when White could save himself by 22.♘e4 ♕f3 23.♖xe2 ♖xe4 24.dxe4 ♕xc3 25.exd5.

21...♕f3 22.♕a5 ♖xe4 23.c4



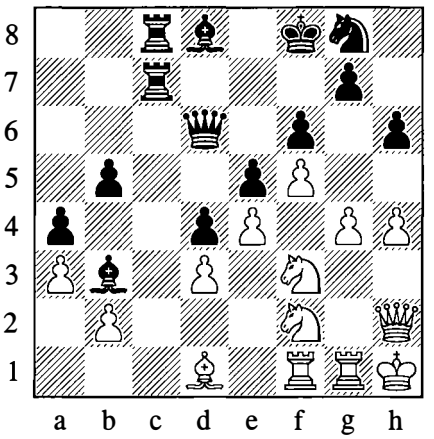
23...♖xc4!
0–1

Notwithstanding the extraordinary effectiveness of the harmonious diagonal action of queen and bishop in the foregoing examples, it is open files, serving as invasion routes, that play a significantly greater role than open diagonals in the processes of the chess struggle. Files are the arteries along which the major pieces conduct their attacks and penetrate the opponent's position.

On this topic, let us look at a characteristic position.

M. Chigorin – S. Tarrasch

St Petersburg (4) 1893



The only open file on the board is the c-file, which is in the power of the black rooks. "Black has occupied the open file" is how an assessment of such positions usually begins. Black's last move was 39...♗b3. Its purpose is not hard to guess: Black is trying to secure a point of entry for his rooks on c2. For this, he has to eliminate the influence exerted on that square from d1 by the hostile bishop.

Seizing a file and penetrating along it into the opponent's position often means securing a decisive initiative – often, but not always. In the present case, for example, White has the possibility of opening the g-file on the kingside by playing g4-g5 and then exchanging with gxf6. His major pieces are ready to occupy this file and create threats to the enemy king. True, a serious point in Black's favour is that he has occupied the c-file already, whereas White has yet to do the same on the g-file. However, Black's attack proceeds at quite a distance from the kingside, whereas White will be creating dangerous threats to the king as soon as the g-file is opened. Will Black be able to do much on the queenside in the meantime? At best he can win the pawns on a3 and b2 (pawns that he could do without), while hoping to be able

to develop a counterattack along the 2nd rank In short, there is going to be a heated clash.

40...♗xd1 41.♘xd1 ♖c2

The invasion has begun!

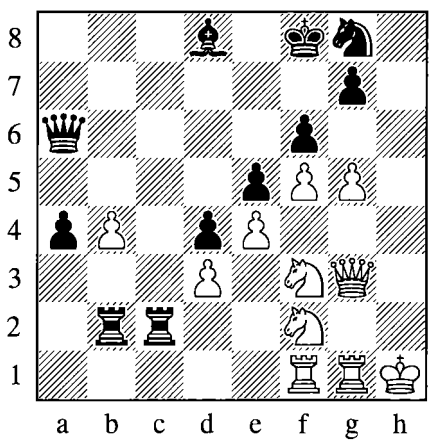
42.♕g3 b4 43.axb4 ♕a6 44.♘f2

Against 44.♘e1 Black has the strong reply 44...♖d2.

However, White could consider sacrificing the d3-pawn by playing 44.g5 at once. There follows 44...hxg5 45.hxg5 ♕xd3 46.gxf6 ♗xf6 47.♘f2, and the position is unclear.

44...♖xb2 45.g5 hxg5 46.hxg5 ♖cc2

This doubling of rooks in the horizontal direction is a frequent and dangerous consequence of the major pieces' vertical invasion. The "storms" unleashed by rooks on the seventh (second) rank will be the subject of a separate section of this book; at the moment we will limit ourselves to recording this colourful position with a diagram.



In this case we were dealing with a "ready-made" open file, where the black rooks had already concentrated their forces to leap inside the enemy fortress. To make use of a file, you first have to prepare to open it by means of a pawn exchange. In the Chigorin – Tarrasch game, this opening was accomplished by ...c5-c4xd3.

The general point is that when an opening of files is included in your plan, you need to judge beforehand how the struggle of the major pieces will turn out on any line you are opening up.

The pawn-exchanging operation aimed at opening a file is a vital stage in implementing the plan to penetrate along that file with the major pieces. Such a plan can more or less be divided into four parts: preparing the pawn exchange; occupying the file; invading along it; and exploiting the advantages gained by the invasion.

We have now reached the point of examining some large-scale processes of a planned struggle, where squares and open lines form the objectives; and where a chess player's mind is directed to a purposeful mode of action by a general method in which the landmarks are supplied by a concrete design, dynamism of thought, and harmony in the operation of the forces.

As a prelude, however, we would like to acquaint the reader with the ideas and thoughts on the subject of planning that were conceived by the founder of systematic strategy in the art of chess – that great thinker, practitioner and master of the game, the first World Champion Wilhelm Steinitz.

Chapter 1

Two Wins by Wilhelm Steinitz – Their Creative and Technical Substance

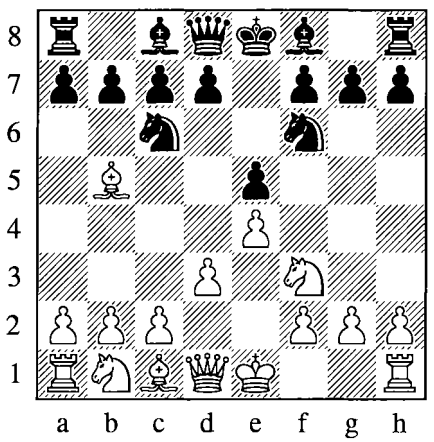
The two games given in the present chapter vividly convey the views on chess held by Wilhelm Steinitz – the first strategic theorist of the chess struggle. By conscious choice we are illustrating Steinitz's strategy not by reference to his theoretical deliberations, which were sometimes unfortunately doctrinaire in character, but rather on the basis of his praxis. We hope that the immense creative canvas of the great master's chess thought will once again spur the reader to look into the nature and details of the planning process, which the later chapters of this book are dedicated to investigating.

In both games, Steinitz's opponent was Emanuel Lasker.

W. Steinitz – Em. Lasker

Ruy Lopez
World Championship (2), USA/Canada 1894

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3



This modest opening move already contains within itself the seeds of a grand strategic design, which was executed with logic and precision both in this game and in numerous others from Steinitz's career. Its essence lies in creating a sturdy centre by fortifying the e4-pawn, and on this basis organizing an energetic attack on the kingside. With these aims in view, the queen's knight travels on the route ♘b1-d2-c4/f1-e3-f5 – a manoeuvre that was worked out and introduced

into widespread practice by Steinitz himself. Meanwhile he would generally shelter his king on the queenside, but in some cases, as for example in the present game, he left it in the centre.

From the very first moves of the opening, then, we can see that Steinitz's thoughts are focused on definite aims extending far beyond the confines of the opening stage. Steinitz is here shedding light on two important principles of creative thinking, by which contemporary masters are still guided: a flank attack needs to be prepared by conquering the centre or solidly fortifying it; and the foundations for a middlegame plan must already be laid in the opening.

4...d6 5.c3 ♗d7

By unpinning his knight and then developing his king's bishop on g7, Lasker was apparently seeking to exert maximum pressure against d4. Steinitz, however, has no intention of joining battle in the centre, and for that reason the deployment of forces that Lasker has in mind does not prove effective enough.

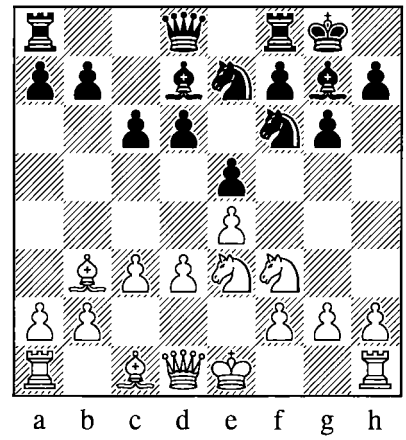
On the other hand, four years before this game was played, an interesting plan of defence for Black had been demonstrated in a match game between Gunsberg and Chigorin. It involved very fast preparation for an advance in the centre with ...d5.

6.♗a4

The bishop is destined for b3 to attack the kingside, or else for c2 with the aim of fortifying the centre.

6...g6 7.♘bd2 ♗g7 8.♘c4 0–0 9.♘e3 ♘e7 10.♗b3 c6

Black has to expend several tempos in preparation for ...d5 which will begin his aggressive operations in the centre. This permits Steinitz to "show his cards" at once.



11.h4!

This tactical device – bringing the rook's pawn very quickly into contact with the opponent's pawn that has moved forward on the knight's file, and thus opening lines for the attack on the king – is also one of the modern procedures.

Starting with this move, Steinitz goes about implementing the main part of his plan – a direct attack on Black's castled position.

11...♕c7 12.♘g5

White threatens, after 13.h5 ♘xh5, to sacrifice the exchange with 14.♖xh5.

12...d5

Lasker also considered 12...h6, but rejected it in view of 13.g4 hxg5 14.hxg5 ♘h7 15.♘f5 gxf5 16.gxf5 ♘xf5 17.♕h5 etc. Black could, however, defend successfully with: 17...♘h6 18.gxh6 ♗f6 19.♗g5! ♕d8! (If the knight or bishop takes on g5, White plays 20.♕g6† with unavoidable mate on g7.) 20.♖g1 ♔h8

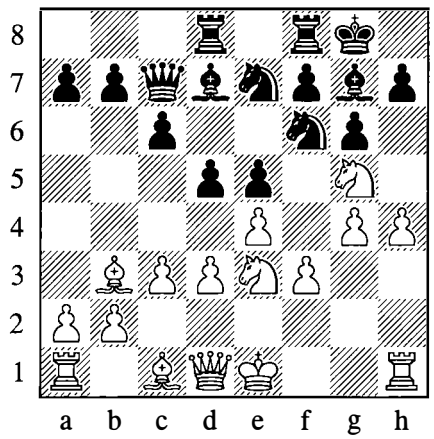
In fairness we should add that in answer to 12...h6 White could continue the attack with 13.♕f3. Then after 13...hxg5 14.hxg5 ♘h7 (or 14...♘h5) an obscure position would arise, demanding great ingenuity and a high level of technique in conducting the attack and the defence. At any rate, neither Lasker nor Steinitz would have been capable of working

out all the multitude of variations over the board.

In the initial period of his chess career Lasker avoided such lines, in which there was much that could not be foreseen. Steinitz was a good deal more willing to take risks, especially when the risk could to some extent be justified by reference to his positional principles.

Broadly speaking, the question of how much risk is permissible on the basis of a general assessment of the position has remained unresolved from Steinitz's day to ours.

13.f3! ♖ad8 14.g4!



14...dxe4

This exchange of pawns, presenting the white queen with the f3-square, deserves censure.

At this point 14...h6 is met by 15.♕e2, when Black should not take the knight: 15...hxg5 16.hxg5 ♘h7 (Or 16...♘e8 17.♕h2 f6 18.exd5 cxd5 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.♗xd5† ♖f7 21.♕h7† ♔f8 22.♕xg6 ♗c6 23.♕xf7† ♕xf7 24.♗xf7 ♔xf7 25.♔e2, and for the bishop and knight White has a rook and three pawns.) 17.♘f5 gxf5 18.♕h2 ♖fe8 19.♕xh7† ♔f8 20.gxf5 and the attack is irresistible.

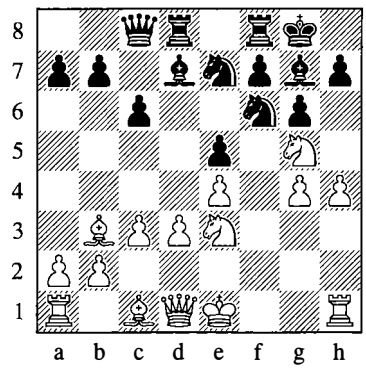
However, after the stronger 15...d4, the knight must retreat (the sacrifice on f5 is clearly inadequate), and White's attack is delayed for a considerable time.

15.fxe4 h6

As things turn out, Lasker resorts to this move after all. White's threat, apart from any direct attacks with ♕f3 or h4-h5, was to play ♕e2 and ♗d2, then castle queenside and bring his queen's rook into the battle. However, the move selected by Lasker fails in its aim, and the black king's position proves to be compromised.

Black could have tried attacking the g4-pawn a third time with:

15...♕c8



16.h5!

This assures White of a very strong initiative. If instead White defends the pawn with 16.♖g1, *then* 16...h6. To sustain his attack, White could try sacrificing both knights, but after 17.♕f3 hxg5 18.hxg5 ♘h7 19.♘f5! gxf5 20.gxf5, Black can return one piece with 20...♗xf5 21.exf5 ♕xf5, and the attack peters out.

16...♗xg4

16...♘xg4 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.♕e2 gives White a winning attack.

16...h6 17.♘xf7 ♖xf7 18.hxg6 ♘xg6 19.♗xf7† ♔xf7 20.♘f5 is also promising for White.

17.♘xg4 ♕xg4 18.♕xg4 ♘xg4 19.hxg6 hxg6

Now White has the pleasant choice between the spectacular 20.♘e6! and the leisurely 20.♔e2, when in spite of the queen exchange, the danger to the black king has not passed.

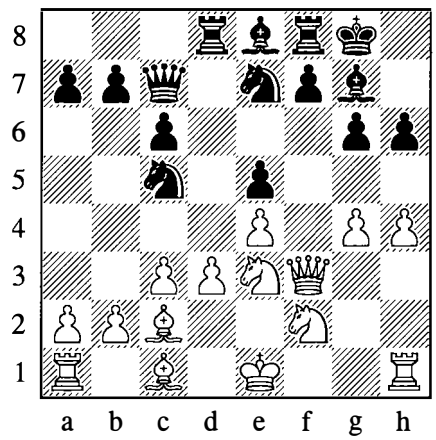
16.♕f3! ♗e8

In this case the knight cannot be taken, for after 16...hxg5 17.hxg5 ♘h7 18.♘f5! gxf5 19.♕h3 ♖fe8 20.♕xh7† ♔f8 21.gxf5 it is time for Black to resign.

17.♗c2 ♘d7 18.♘h3

A sensible retreat, but one which also harbours thoughts about the further continuation of the attack.

18...♘c5 19.♘f2



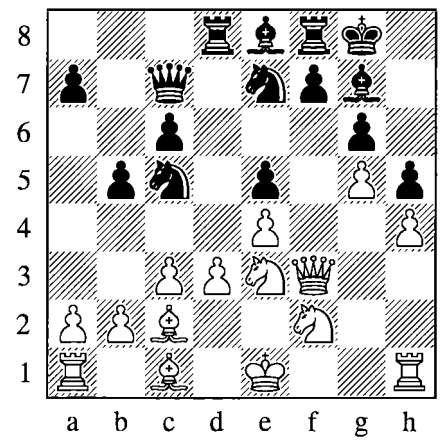
These last moves of White's, fortifying the d3-point, are evidence of Steinitz's strict adherence to the principle he formulated himself, which states that the success of a flank attack is only possible with a stable centre.

In this context the range of action of White's pieces is noteworthy. A mere three moves ago, his bishop stationed on b3 and his knight on g5 were directed against the f7-point. Now they have entirely switched over to fulfilling defensive functions. Great flexibility in manoeuvring with the pieces was a characteristic feature of Steinitz's play. At the same time we must observe that Steinitz has still maintained his attacking position on the kingside and, as the following events will testify, has even resolved to carry on the attack without mobilizing his queenside reserves. From Lasker's next move, we can see that the entry of these reserves into the fray was just what he feared.

19...b5

A very cunning idea, aimed at working up a counterattack in the centre and on the queenside, and designed to meet the natural 20.♗d2. In that case, there would follow 20...b4 21.cxb4 (or 21.0–0–0 bxc3 22.bxc3 ♕a5 with a queenside initiative) 21...♘e6! 22.♗c3 c5 23.bxc5 ♕xc5 or 23.b5 ♘d4, completely refuting White's plan. Steinitz figures out Lasker's scheme and immediately throws himself into the attack which is founded on a bold and attractive knight sacrifice.

20.g5 h5



21.♘f5! gxf5

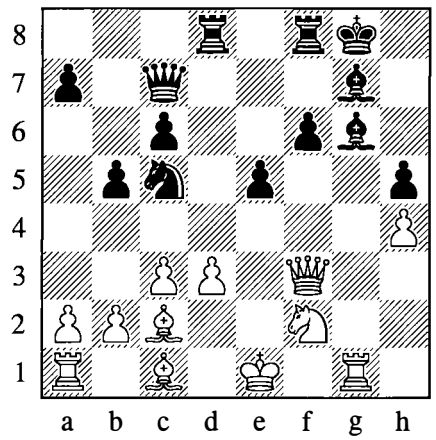
Now the knight *has* to be taken, as passive defence would hold out no hope. The only active move that Black has available, aside from acceptance of the sacrifice, is 21...f6, but this fails to 22.♘xg7 ♔xg7 (22...fxg5 23.♘xe8) 23.gxf6† ♖xf6 24.♗h6† ♔f7 25.♕e3, when Black is in a bad way.

22.exf5 f6 23.g6 ♘xg6

Obviously forced, given the threat of ♕xh5. As a result of the initial "bloodshed" Black

gains a pawn, but an open g-file makes its appearance and White takes control of it. And the g-file is the direct route into the "palace" of the monarch himself. This circumstance is what is specially menacing to Black.

24.fxg6 ♗xg6 25.♖g1



Now how is Black to defend?

If the bishop on g6 moves, White plays 26.♗h6.

If 25...♔h7, then 26.♖xg6 followed by d3-d4†.

Finally 25...♕f7 is answered by: 26.♕g2 ♗h7 (26...♔h7 27.♗e3! ♘xd3†? 28.♘xd3 ♗xd3 29.♗xd3† ♖xd3 30.♕e4†) 27.♗h6 ♖d7 (27...♘e6 28.♗b3) 28.♗xg7 ♕xg7 29.♕h2 ♗g6 30.d4 and White wins material.

25...e4

An interesting attempt at saving the day is 25...♗xd3! (it was Chigorin who first drew attention to this move).

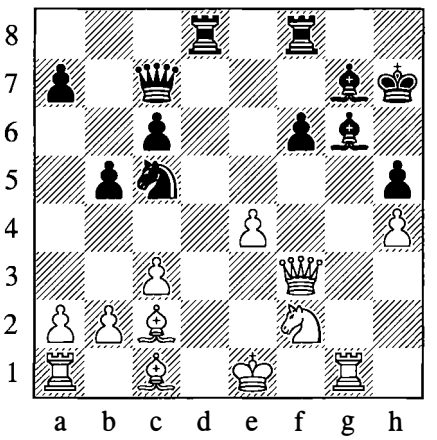
In the event of 26.♗xd3 ♖xd3! 27.♘xd3 e4 28.♕xh5 ♘xd3†, Black has good chances of at least reaching a draw.

If White answers with 26.♗h6, then after 26...♖f7 27.♗xg7 ♖xg7 28.0–0–0 ♗xc2 he fails to extract anything from the exposed position of the black king.

The existence of this possibility testifies to the complexity of the struggle. Having missed it, Lasker suffers material losses, after which the fight enters its largely technical phase.

26.dxe4 ♔h7

Or 26...♕f7 27.b4 ♘e6 28.♗b3 ♖fe8 29.♘h3, and the knight reaches f4.



27.♖xg6! ♔xg6 28.♕f5† ♔f7 29.♕xh5† ♔g8 30.♕xc5

White not only has bishop, knight and pawn for a rook – in itself an advantage sufficient to win – he also maintains direct threats. His two bishops are operating with great strength. The threat at present is the lethal 31.♗b3†.

30...♕e5 31.♗e3 a6 32.a4

With the queenside reserves brought into the battle, the game is decided at once.

32...♖fe8 33.axb5 axb5 34.♕xe5 ♖xe5 35.♖a6

Invasion! What is notable is that the rook's energetic sally to a6 is its first and last action in this game. Just one move! The rook paralyses the opponent's forces and thereby lends powerful support to White's crowning attack with his minor pieces. Interestingly, his king's rook has similarly made only two moves – ♖h1-g1xg6.

Minimum effort, maximum gain! Such is the principle of economy, of which Steinitz spoke more than once in his theoretical works, and which he also demonstrated many a time in his own games.

35...♖c8 36.♘g4 ♖e7 37.♗c5 ♖ee8 38.♘e3 ♗f8 39.♗d4 ♔f7 40.h5 ♗e7 41.♗b3† ♔f8 42.♘f5

In conclusion, a permanent knight appears on the scene. Under its cover, and with help from the superbly placed bishops, a free path to the dream square h8 is opened for the white h-pawn. Black therefore resigned.

1–0

W. Steinitz – Em. Lasker

Queen's Gambit
St Petersburg 1895/6

1.d4

With the Queen's Pawn opening Steinitz inflicted a large number of defeats on his contemporaries. Of course this was not a matter of the very first move, but of those well-ordered, purposeful plans which he executed in this opening with persistence and logic.

1...d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗f4

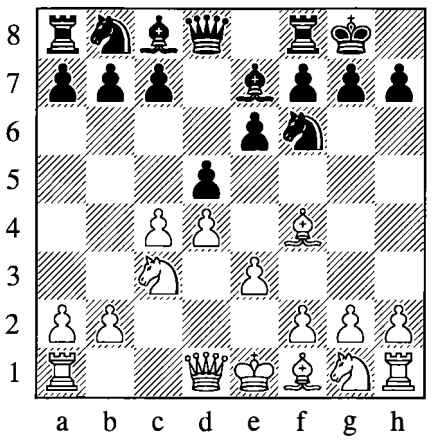
Steinitz also played 4.♗g5; he had done so as early as 1873 against Anderssen at the international tournament in Vienna.

4...♗e7

A colourless reply, ignoring White's plan and allowing him – just as in the previous game – to set up a sturdy centre and afterwards undertake an energetic flank attack.

Yet Black had at least two ways of responding actively to Steinitz's scheme – the immediate 4...c5, undermining White's pressure against the e5-point, and also the well-known attack against the c3-knight by means of ...c6, ...♕a5 and ...♗b4. The latter plan, known to opening theory as the Cambridge Springs system, increases even more in strength with the white bishop on f4 (instead of g5).

5.e3 0–0



6.c5!?

White's plan founded on 4.♗f4 emerges with full clarity. He forestalls the counterattack with ...c5 and builds a solid structure in the centre.

In advancing his pawn to c5, Steinitz had to take care to weigh up his opponent's undermining possibilities with ...b6 or ...e5. He was probably convinced by the variation 6...b6 7.b4 a5 8.a3, when Black fails to shake the c5-outpost.

[Editor's note: Many years later, Geller discovered a way to create counterplay: 8...axb4 9.axb4 ♖xa1 10.♕xa1 ♘c6 11.♕a4 bxc5!! 12.♕xc6?! (12.bxc5 is more circumspect, leading to equal chances after 12...♗d7 13.♗b5 ♕a8) 12...cxd4! Black obtained an extremely dangerous initiative for the piece in Lerner – Geller, Riga 1985.]

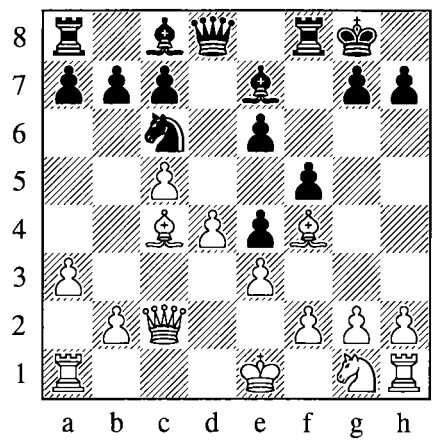
6...♘e4

Threatening to meet 7.♘f3 or 7.♗d3 by exchanging on c3 and starting an undermining operation with ...b6 afterwards. If White exchanges on e4 himself, Black will prevent

the white knight from developing on f3 and thereby weaken his opponent's pressure against e5. All the same, Lasker's reasoning is not especially far-sighted. The black pawn switching to e4 becomes the target for a break with f2-f3. Furthermore Black is freeing the square c4 for White's bishop, which will conveniently station itself there for the attack.

Black ought to be concentrating his attention on the central point e5. To this end he needed to play 6...c6 in preparation for developing his queen's knight on d7 (if 6...♘bd7 at once, then 7.♘b5 forces the other knight to retreat to e8). The game might continue as follows: 7.♘f3 ♘bd7 8.♗d3 ♘h5, and then, according to circumstances, ...f5 or ...♘xf4.

7.♘xe4 dxe4 8.♕c2 f5 9.♗c4 ♘c6 10.a3



While resolutely pursuing the main theme of his plan, White displays some useful prudence. Black was threatening ...♘a5 to deal with the formidable bishop, but now that move would be met by 11.♗a2.

10...♗f6 11.0–0–0 ♔h8

This and Black's next move serve to prepare ...e5, which is his only way of undertaking something against White's f2-f3 break.

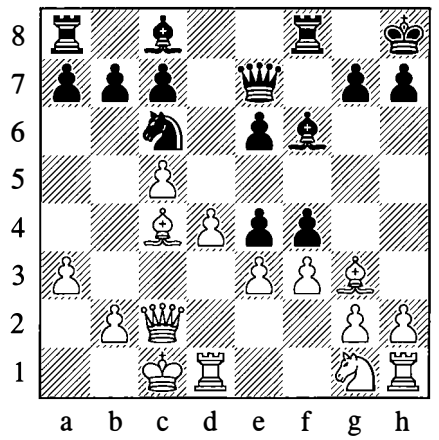
12.f3 ♕e7!

Very astutely played, presenting White with a serious problem. Now 13.fxe4 will be met by 13...e5; and if 14.d5 then 14...exf4 15.dxc6 ♕xc5, and the initiative is already with Black.

13.♗g3

So as to meet 13...e5 with 14.d5 ♘a5 15.♗a2.

13...f4



This thrust looks highly promising. Thus, on 14.♗xf4 Black plays 14...e5 15.dxe5 ♘xe5 16.♕xe4 ♗f5! 17.♕xf5 ♘xc4 with a winning attack. However, Steinitz has a surprise prepared for his opponent.

14.♕xe4!

A beautiful sacrifice which Black is compelled to accept. White obtains two pawns for the bishop, keeps his chain of eight pawns intact, takes possession of the centre, and – most importantly – obtains a very dangerous attack on his opponent's king, thanks to the opening of the h-file.

14...fxg3 15.hxg3 g6

Black decides to give up one more pawn for the purposes of defence.

Indeed 15...h6 would be answered by 16.♗d3 or 16.f4 ♗d7 17.♘f3, with g3-g4 to follow.

Nor is 15...g5 satisfactory; Steinitz tells us he intended to meet it by 16.f4 g4 17.♘e2 ♗d7 18.♕c2, with the threat of e3-e4-e5. White would also be threatening to double rooks on the h-file.

16.♕xg6 ♗d7

Not 16...e5, on account of d4-d5-d6.

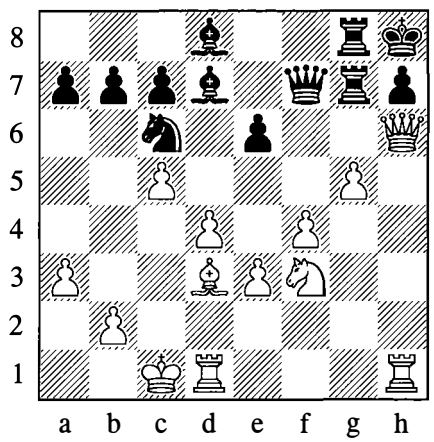
17.f4 ♖f7

[Editor's note: 17...♖g8 (Kasparov) was more stubborn.]

18.g4 ♖g7 19.♕h6 ♖xg4 20.♗d3 ♖g7 21.♘f3 ♕f7 22.g4 ♖ag8

Black can't take the g4-pawn, as after 23.♕xh7† he loses the bishop on d7.

23.g5 ♗d8



24.♖h2!

This is much stronger than winning the exchange with 24.g6. The threat of ♖dh1 is unanswerable.

24...♖g6 25.♕h5 ♖6g7 26.♖dh1 ♕xh5 27.♖xh5 ♖f8 28.♖xh7† ♖xh7

Or 28...♔g8 29.♖xg7† ♔xg7 30.♖h7†, and the bishop on d7 perishes.

29.♖xh7† ♔g8 30.♖xd7 ♖f7 31.♗c4! 1–0

Black loses a fourth pawn after 31...♖xd7 32.♗xe6† ♖f7 33.g6.

The entire game may serve as a model of concrete planning and of harmony in the actions of the forces (attacking the point h7).

Both games are distinguished by clear, purposeful thought. Steinitz's play in them speaks for itself. Nonetheless we would like to conclude this opening chapter by recalling once again how skilfully Steinitz operated with the pawns, and how economically he deployed the energy of his pieces.

Minimum effort, maximum gain! This was Steinitz's motto in strategic play; it urges a prudent attitude to time as measured in chess tempos. In repeating it, we may say that this motto is inscribed on the creative banner of chess art in our own day.

In Steinitz's manual *The Modern Chess Instructor* we find an interesting statement about the pawns:

"The skilful management of the Pawns ... is one of the most important items in the conduct of the game ... Owing to the privilege of promotion to a Queen, ... the loss of one of them is in the large majority of cases fatal among first-class masters. It is, moreover, now recognized among experts that not alone the weakness of one single Pawn but also that of one single square into which any hostile man can be planted with commanding effect, will cause great trouble, and often the loss of the game, and that by proper management of the Pawns such points of vantage need not be opened for the opponent."

There is no need to say how much these thoughts are in tune with our own times.

Chapter 2

Stages in a Plan – Square and File as Targets of the Plan – The Preparatory Stage – The Stage of Concrete Action – Exploitation of Gains

Usually any plan can be subdivided into a number of consecutive stages, each one issuing logically from the last. A single large plan can be split up, as it were, into a few small plans, with their own aims and their own paths to attaining them. It may also happen that the course of events compels one of the players, or sometimes both, to revise their plans in a radical manner.

As an example, let us try to picture (in a provisionally sketchy form) the implementation of a three-stage plan.

In the first stage, there is a struggle to create objects which the specific plan will target. This stage is characterized by a lack of aims of a concrete nature; if there *are* any such aims (such as provoking one of the opponent's pawns into moving), then they are of a localized, you might say narrowly tactical, type. In this part of the plan, the players need to be guided by general considerations based on the fundamental positional principles of the game. The task for each side is to create weak squares, and where possible "weak points", in the enemy camp. At the same time, each player has to hinder his opponent's accomplishment of the same tasks. Thus in the first stage of the plan, in addition to his own active operations, a player must take prophylactic measures against the weakening of his own position.

In the second stage, a systematic purpose emerges. The paths to achieving the aim become more and more distinct. The play becomes tactically clear-cut.

If one of the players achieves his aim, the struggle proceeds to the third stage, where the point is to exploit the advantage gained. This stage can, if only to a certain extent, be called technical, inasmuch as it often requires the skilful application of measures derived from the theoretical laws and rules of the game.

The opening is a constituent part of the first stage of the plan. In some cases, particularly with gambits, the opening struggle may also embrace the second stage. A single plan may consist not just of three but of four, five or even more stages. On the other hand, plans consisting of only a single stage are also familiar from practice. They are most often seen in games where plans have remained uncompleted, where the scene has been transformed and therefore separate sections of the game are logically unconnected.

The present chapter is devoted to plans in which the main targets are weak squares and open files.

In accordance with what has been said, a plan with these targets can be divided into the following stages:

(1) The struggle to create a weak square (or open a file).

(2) The struggle to capture (occupy) the weak square or the file.

(3) Exploitation of the advantage which the occupation of the weak square or open file confers.

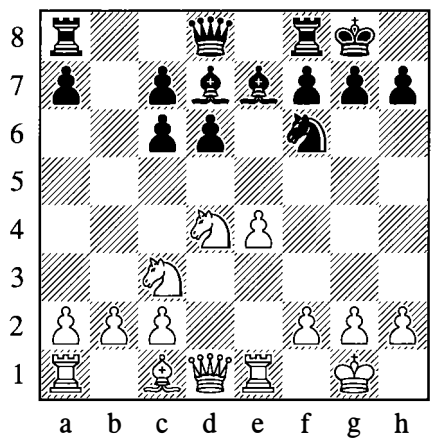
R. Teichmann – O. Bernstein

Ruy Lopez
St Petersburg 1909

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 d6 5.d4 ♗d7 6.0–0 ♗e7 7.♖e1 exd4

Ever since the game Tarrasch – Marco, Dresden 1892, it has been well known that castling for Black at this point leads to the loss of a pawn after 8.♗xc6 ♗xc6 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♕xd8 ♖axd8 11.♘xe5, seeing that 11...♗xe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 is unplayable in view of 13.♘d3.

8.♘xd4 0–0 9.♗xc6 bxc6



With full justification we can call this a position from opening theory. It has occurred hundreds of times in practice, and even the most eminent authorities disagree in their assessment of it. Emanuel Lasker played the Black side of this line frequently and with a great deal of success. But then, many people consider White's chances to be more promising on account of his mobile e-pawn in the centre, his possession of rather more space, and, finally, the slight weakness of Black's queenside pawns which may play a role in the endgame.

The diagram position represents the point of departure for the plans of both opponents. For White, the aim is to advance with e4-e5. In some games he tried doing this at once, but it emerged that after 10.e5 dxe5 11.♖xe5 ♗d6 the placing of Black's pieces improves and White forfeits some of his central gains. It follows that e4-e5 requires preparation. Black's task consists in impeding the e-pawn's advance by all available means. To this end he needs to exert strong pressure on the e5-square. At the same time he may stage some kind of demonstration in the open b-file, so as not to let White concentrate fully on his operations in the centre.

10.b3

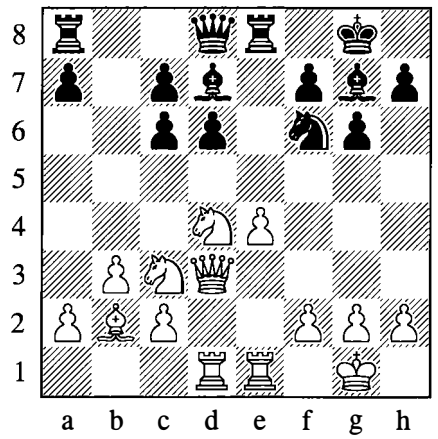
This move can be described as a casual tactical oversight. An interesting point is that a similar "error" (though that is perhaps too strong a word in this case) was committed three years before the present game, in Forgacs – Wolf, Nuremberg 1906.

As a link in White's plan of increasing the pressure against the e5-square, the move b2-b3 would be admissible, but this purpose is better served by 10.♗f4. The point is that once the white pawn has gone to b3, Black will have the chance to march his a-pawn to a4 as the basis for working up a general queenside offensive. This would seem a perfectly logical thing to do after transferring his bishop from e7 to g7 – where it will restrain the e4-e5 advance and simultaneously give long-range support to Black's attack on the a- and b-files.

10...♖e8

Black is intent on his plan and doesn't spot the chance that has cropped up for seizing the initiative at once. In the game just mentioned, Wolf played 10...d5! and answered 11.e5 with 11...♗b4! 12.♗d2 ♘g4, threatening ...♕h4 as well as ...♗c5.

11.♗b2 ♗f8 12.♕d3 g6 13.♖ad1 ♗g7



This position presents White with a number of quite difficult problems.

Black has set up such a sturdy line of defence that it is very hard for White to organize a thrust across the frontier with e4-e5. But without this, his major pieces, huddling in the rear, are condemned to inactivity. For that reason, White ought to be striving persistently to implement his plan – he should be fighting for the e5-square to achieve the advance of his centre pawn. The consistent 14.f4 would keep the initiative in his hands. Teichmann, however, was one of those players who are loth to accept even a small amount of risk in their games without being forced into it. The move f2-f4 would to some extent open the white king's position; it would allow the aggressive reply ...♘h5 and weaken the e4-point; and at the end of the day, e4-e5 would not be guaranteed by it. These considerations prompted Teichmann to switch to defensive tactics which involve additional support for the centre and the fortification of the queenside.

14.f3

With this modest-looking move White takes the sting out of ...♘h5, which in conjunction with ...♗e5 and ...♕h4 could have initiated a direct kingside attack.

If now 14...♘h5, there can follow (for example) 15.♘de2 ♕h4 16.♘a4.

Black therefore goes over to the plan of attacking on the queenside.

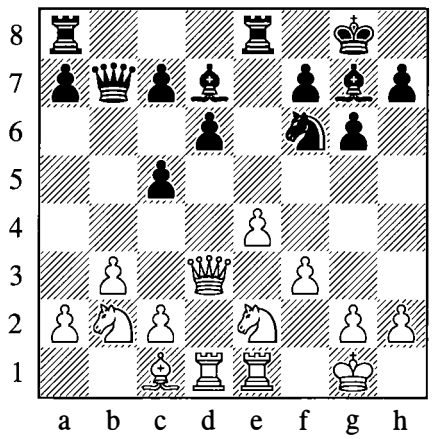
14...♕b8 15.♗c1

Retreat! Teichmann acknowledges the failure of his operation with 10.b3. The role of the bishop on b2 within the general "orchestra" of White's pieces proved to be negligible, and Teichmann transfers this piece to e3 so as to take part in the forthcoming events.

15...♕b6 16.♘a4

The immediate 16.♗e3 would be met by 16...c5 17.♘de2 a5.

16...♕b7 17.♘b2 c5 18.♘e2



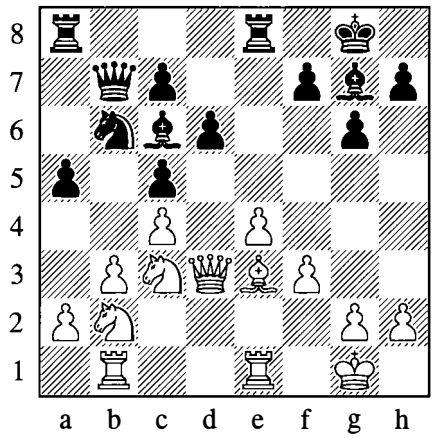
18...♗b5

A move of this kind can be called an intermediate move. Before stationing his bishop on the square allotted to it by the plan (c6), Black considers it useful to provoke c2-c4. Why is this necessary? Black intends to organize an attack on the pawn at b3 by means of ...a7-a5-a4, so it is vital for him to deprive it of the c2-pawn's protection.

19.c4 ♗c6 20.♘c3

Anticipating Black's offensive with the a-pawn, White bars the a4-square as far as this is possible. A battle centred on that square now begins, in which Black, who has held the initiative since move 14, is the attacking side.

20...♘d7 21.♗e3 ♘b6 22.♖b1 a5



23.♗f2!

A move with a deep plan behind it, the aim of which is not detected by the opponent. In effect this move prevents the immediate advance of the hostile a-pawn, as will later become clear. The black queen is awkwardly placed opposite the white rook, and if Black envisages continuing the attack on the wing, it would be useful for him to remove the queen from the b-file to c8 or a6.

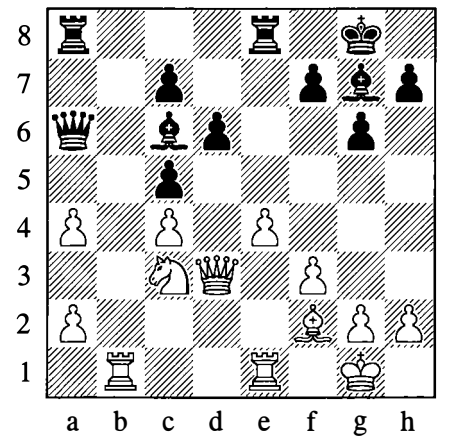
23...a4?!

This move is a mistake. True, the pawn can be recovered by force, as Bernstein of course has foreseen; but he hasn't realized that it will be recovered at the cost of... the game. The conclusion is clear: even though your plan is well conceived, executing it in too straightforward a manner can have lamentable results.

24.♘xa4 ♘xa4?!

This too is played without due reflection. An improvement is 24...♗xa4 25.bxa4 ♕c6, although even so, the initiative is with White after 26.♗e3.

25.bxa4 ♕a6



26.♖e2

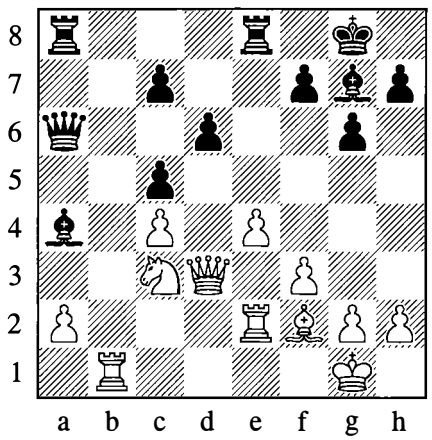
Again an outwardly modest move, but essentially it serves as preparation for a powerful plan of attack on the kingside. The move is useful from various points of view: it permits the doubling of rooks on the open b-file, frees e1 for the bishop and gives additional protection to the a2-pawn. The chief purpose (the one that contributes to the plan!) will only be revealed after three more moves.

26...♗xa4

Since move 23 Black has been slipping downhill. He grasps at a "paltry" pawn without foreseeing the imminent retribution. A lesser evil, even though scarcely pleasant, was 26...♗xc3. The best defence should be acknowledged as 26...♕c8 followed by ...♕d7 or ...♕e6, switching the queen to the centre while still preserving hopes of play on the a-file. At any rate, Black ought on no account to have allowed the white knight to reach d5 – with tempo for good measure (that is, with the creation of a threat).

At this point we may pertinently observe

that once you have gone astray, in chess as in life, it is not easy to keep your self-control, to start looking for a new path in the adverse circumstances without losing your presence of mind. We often see that after making one mistake and losing the thread of his thoughts, a player will fret, get annoyed and agitated, begin playing badly and add to his own woes. In this game, Black's moves after the mistaken ...a4 bear the stamp of dejection and vexation.



27.♘d5!

The start of a plan of attack which White conducts to its end in splendid style over the course of twenty moves, and which culminates in a mating formation.

At present White has the direct threat of ♘xc7, but the goal of his offensive is something quite different – it is the weakened f6-square, and a struggle duly begins for possession of this point.

White's plan can be divided into three stages. The first involves exchanging the bishop that acts as the chief defender of f6. The second stage is an attack against that square and an invasion there. The third is the exploitation of this invasion. In the implementation of these stages, all the general elements of methodical planning – concreteness of design, dynamics in play, harmony of the forces – are strikingly exhibited.

27...♖a7 28.♗h4

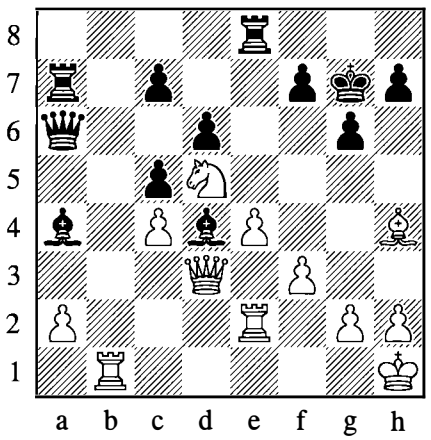
This is why White played ♗f2 at move 23. After one more move we shall also see how 26.♖e2 fits into the plan. Black cannot ignore the threats of ♘f6† or ♗f6, and sets about defending the f6-point which is the crucial "redoubt" in his castled position.

Clearly 28...♖e6 is no good on account of 29.♖b8† (it was Black who opened the b-file, but threats have arisen there for White!).

While after 28...c6 29.♘f6† ♗xf6 30.♗xf6 ♖d7 31.♕e3, the threat of ♕h6 annihilates Black at once.

Only one possibility remains.

28...♗d4† 29.♔h1 ♔g7



30.♗f2!

This forces an exchange of bishops, as 30...♗e5 would be met by 31.f4, while in the event of 30...♗f6 31.♘xf6 ♔xf6 32.♕c3† Black's position is woeful. The role of White's rook on e2 is now clear – it guarantees the bishop exchange.

30...♗xf2 31.♖xf2

Threatening to check on c3. White begins the second stage of his plan – the fight to penetrate to the weak square f6 with his knight. Realizing that the surrender of this square virtually means death, Black makes

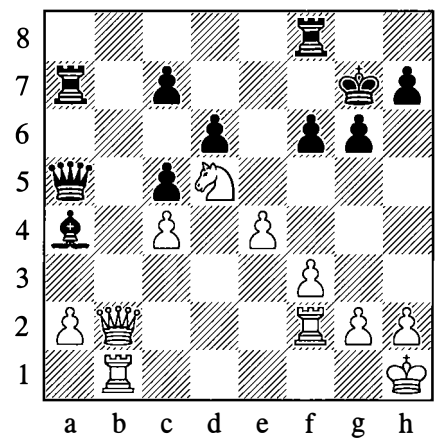
heroic efforts to defend it, but after the bishop exchange his forces are insufficient for the task.

31...♕a5 32.♕e2!

Again threatening a diagonal check, this time from b2.

32...f6 33.♕b2 ♖f8

Black just needs a single tempo to save himself. If it were his move now, he could play ...c6, repulsing the attack on f6. Sadly this tempo is not available, and the game is decided. White's threats, following one after the other, don't give Black a moment's pause for breath.



34.g4!

Threatening 35.♘xf6. Black can delay the collapse of f6 by three moves only.

34...h6 35.h4 g5 36.f4! gxh4 37.♘xf6

So the invasion is accomplished, and with it we may say that the second part of White's plan is over.

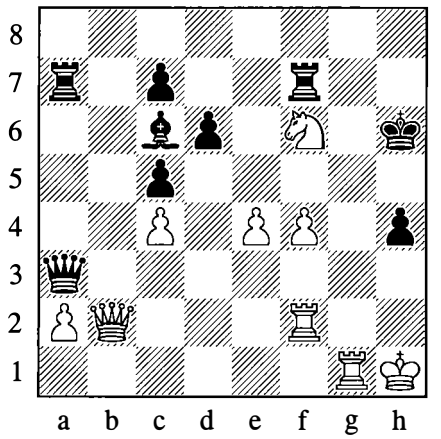
The third and final stage will consist of exploiting the advantage obtained by the knight's penetration to f6. Black's king position is completely shattered; his main forces are on the other wing and cannot come to the defence in time.

Meanwhile White's threats are looming large. Right now he threatens 38.♘h5† ♔f7 39.♕f6† (or 39.♕g7†) and mate in two more moves.

37...♖f7 38.g5

Now the g-file is opened and the rooks join the attack.

38...♗c6 39.♖g1 ♕a3 40.gxh6† ♔xh6



41.♖h2! ♗xe4†

This piece sacrifice is the sole defence against mate (if 41...♕f3† then 42.♕g2). Material gains are added to White's positional plus. The agony doesn't last long.

42.♘xe4 ♕f3† 43.♕g2 ♕xg2† 44.♖xg2 ♖xf4 45.♖g6† ♔h7 46.♘f6†
1–0

Y. Vilner – P. Romanovsky

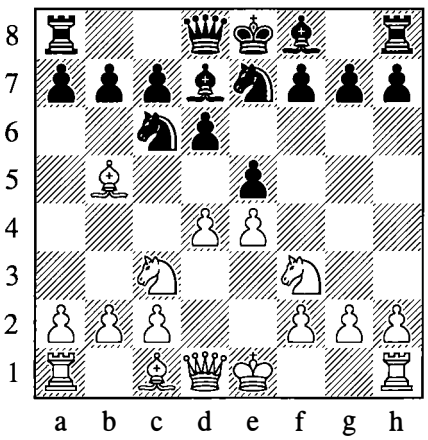
Ruy Lopez
3rd USSR Championship, Moscow 1924

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 d6 4.d4 ♗d7 5.♘c3 ♘ge7

This is how Steinitz sometimes played, although the move holds up the development of Black's kingside by one tempo; moreover, from e7 the knight doesn't have the same scope

for action (especially in the fight for the centre) as it would have from f6.

So what was it about this move that attracted Steinitz nonetheless? His idea was to try bolstering the e5-point with ...♘g6, whereas after 5...♘f6 6.0–0 ♗e7 7.♖e1 Black has to abandon his pawn outpost on that square and exchange with ...exd4. For quite a long time the authorities on opening theory, including Steinitz himself, regarded this exchange as the surrender of the centre. Black's 5...♘ge7 was just one of Steinitz's numerous experiments.



6.♗g5

Chigorin played this way against Steinitz in the 11th game of their return match in 1892. Lasker, in some of *his* match games with Steinitz, played 6.♗c4 with the threat of ♘g5. In the present game, Vilner's opponent (the author of these lines) was intending to answer 6.♗c4 by trying out a recommendation of Chigorin's, 6...♘a5.

6...h6

Steinitz at this point played 6...f6 7.♗e3 ♘g6. In the present game, Black rejected that line without going into specific variations. He was afraid of presenting his opponent with the open a2-g8 diagonal, on which, after 8.a3!? the white bishop might establish itself; while if the light-squared bishops were exchanged by 8...♘xd4, Black would be left with a weak e6-square. However, in the experimental system that Black had chosen, he needed to think more boldly and concretely. The saying, "The sheep are safe and the wolves aren't hungry" should not be used as the basis for a chess plan.

7.♗e3

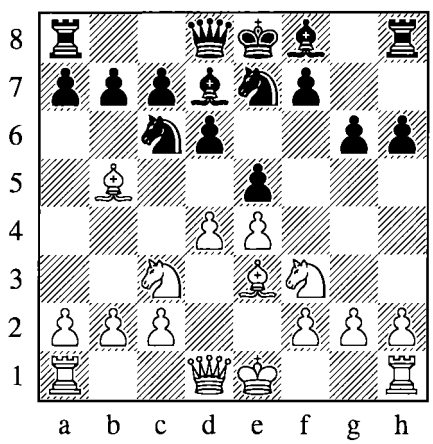
The seemingly more logical 7.♗h4 unexpectedly leads to difficulties with the defence of the d4-pawn after 7...g5 8.♗g3 (8.♘xg5?! does not offer White enough compensation for the piece) 8...g4. White would have to go in for 9.♗xc6 ♘xc6 10.d5 gxf3 11.dxc6 ♗xc6 12.♕xf3, allowing Black a good game with 12...♕g5 or 12...h5.

Interestingly, Vilner was not afraid of 7...g5 but of 7...♘xd4 8.♘xd4 exd4 9.♕xd4 ♗xb5 10.♘xb5 ♘c6! 11.♗xd8 ♘xd4 12.♘xd4 ♖xd8. There is no doubt that this line too relieves Black's position.

In planning your play you often have to investigate quite a number of concrete lines to justify or refute some particular idea.

7...g6

A faulty scheme, out of keeping with the idea of developing the knight on e7. Black should have bolstered the e5-point with 7...♘g6 and quickly finished his development (...♗e7, ...0–0). A knight sortie to d5 would promise White nothing substantial, and the knight could hardly be maintained on that square.



8.dxe5!

The start of a plan that is very dangerous to Black. White has an advantage in development, and he intends to make use of it by opening the d-file.

If Black answers 8...dxe5, his king's bishop is condemned to inactivity; but against 8...♘xe5 White will be quite content to continue 9.♘xe5 dxe5 (9...♗xb5? 10.♘g4) 10.♗xd7† (10.♕e2 is not bad either) 10...♕xd7 11.♕xd7† ♔xd7 12.0–0–0† ♔c6 13.♖d3 ♗g7 14.♖hd1, with an indisputable plus.

8...dxe5

Black chooses the lesser of the two evils and tries to maintain complex conditions for the difficult struggle that lies ahead.

9.♕d2

White's plan is to take control of the d-file after 0–0–0. At the same time he wants to make castling difficult for his opponent. However, the move he plays fails to anticipate the following events in a sufficiently concrete manner, and two moves later he has to transfer the queen to e2. It would have been better to do this at once, postponing the operations of his major pieces along the d-file until after queenside castling.

9...♗g7 10.0–0–0 ♗g4 11.♕e2

Against 11.♘d5, Black would have an adequate defence in 11...a6. White prefers to continue on his planned course, reconciling himself to the loss of tempo.

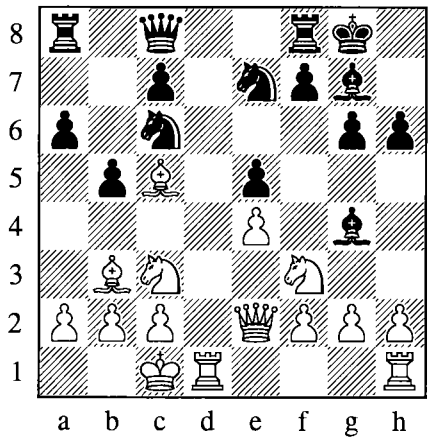
11...♕c8 12.♗c5 a6

It was essential to defend against 13.♗xe7, which would now be met by 13...axb5.

13.♗a4

White would also retain the better position after 13.♗xc6†, but that would mean a certain release of the tension. Black would probably reply 13...bxc6.

13...b5 14.♗b3 0–0



15.♘d5!

With this move, White's advantage takes a distinct form. He acquires the possibility of starting an attack on the kingside.

15...♖e8 16.h3 ♗e6 17.♕d2

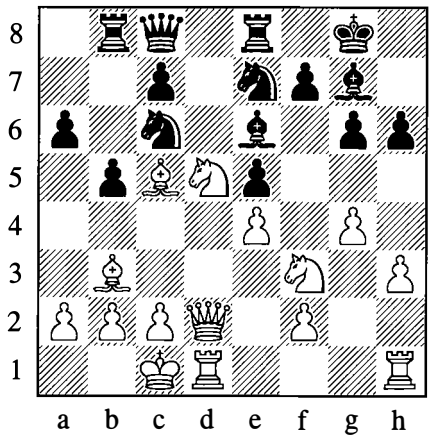
Played to obviate the tactical possibilities associated with the queen's position opposite the black rook on e8. Such possibilities would indeed arise after 17...♗xd5 18.♗xd5 (18.exd5 ♘a5) 18...♘xd5 19.exd5 ♘a5 (or 19...♘d4).

White had, however, a more logical path towards occupation of the d-file: 17.♘xe7† ♘xe7 18.♖d3, followed by tripling his major pieces there.

17...♖b8

The aim of this move is to prepare an attack on the b2-point. Black intends to follow with ...a5 – to induce a2-a4 – then to exchange on a4, opening the b-file; after that, he will endeavour to bring his bishop on g7 into play. These are all rather nebulous hopes, though they do cause White some anxiety.

18.g4



White is not afraid of phantoms! His attacking move has an air of exuberance and faith in the correctness of his own plan. He now threatens to make decisive gains by means of g4-g5 followed by ♘f6†.

18...a5!

Black sacrifices a pawn in the hope of putting some life into his pieces and, crucially, of diverting White from carrying out his plan.

19.g5

Strange as it may seem, this attack is not now so fearsome.

White ought not to have declined the gift: 19.♘xe7† ♘xe7 20.♕xa5 ♗xb3 21.cxb3 (21.axb3 ♘c6 22.♕c3 ♖a8 gives Black a dangerous initiative for the pawn) 21...♘c6 (21...♖a8?! 22.♕xb5 ♖xa2 23.♗a3) 22.♕c3 ♕e6 Even so, the exploitation of White's extra pawn would have entailed considerable difficulties.

19...♗xd5

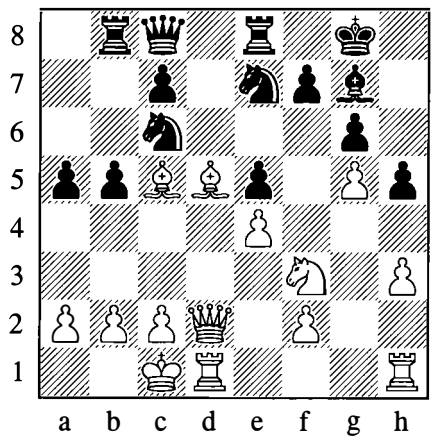
Of course he couldn't allow the check on f6.

20.♗xd5

It's hard to decide whether 20.exd5 was the better option: 20...a4 21.gxh6 (or 21.dxc6 axb3 22.cxb3 ♕f5 and for the pawn, Black obtains promising play) 21...axb3 22.cxb3 (But not 22.hxg7? bxa2 23.♕h6 f6! and Black wins.) White will regain the piece, but again Black will obtain good play for the pawn deficit.

20...h5

After this move, sealing the kingside, White's attack is at an end.



The conditions of the struggle have radically altered. It turns out that White's plan has not been realized. Black is rid of the burdens that descended on him as a result of his poor opening play. The opponents must consider the position anew, think up fresh plans and work out the possible variations.

The first question is whether White can win a pawn as he could have done a couple of moves ago, by 21.♗xe7 ♘xe7 22.♕xa5.

No, he cannot. There follows 22...♘xd5 23.♖xd5 (23.exd5 ♕f5! is even worse) 23...♖a8, and now 24.♕xb5 is impossible owing to 24...c6, while on 24.♕c3 Black simply captures the pawn on a2.

The second question is what White ought to undertake instead, and whether there is anything threatening him from the opposing side.

Black has no immediate threats, but overall his forces are more actively placed than White's. Black's mobile pawn group on the queenside may motivate him to form a plan aimed at opening up the enemy king's position. Another possible idea is to play ...a4 and ...♘d8, threatening to win the white bishop with ...c6. Finally, Black can improve the placing of his pieces by ..♕a6 and ...♖bd8. Moreover White needs to keep an eye on ...♘xd5, for in the case of exd5 the bishop on g7 will come to life (after ...e5-e4); while after ♕xd5 and the reply ...♕b7, the vanguard position of the white queen will not be particularly happy.

The weight of all these arguments is, of course, relative, since they are abstracted from the dynamics of the coming battle, but they should be taken into account nonetheless. Proceeding from what has been said, White could have drawn up a plan, even if only a very sketchy one, in which his old but valid aim – occupation of the d-file by the rooks – would play the role of guiding light.

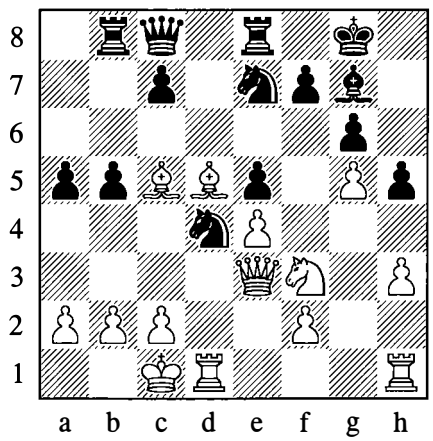
21.♕e3?

In all probability, this move *was* viewed by Vilner as a link in the plan of seizing the d-file with his rooks. His intention would have been to continue 22.♘h4, followed by ♕f3. Sooner or later Black would have to capture with ♘xd5; then after ♖xd5 and ♖hd1, the aim would be achieved. Incidentally, with the present arrangement of forces, the queen is defending the h3-pawn. And yet White is taking the wrong path towards his goal. The queen is dangerously placed in opposition to the enemy rook, and Black immediately makes use of this circumstance. We can see from this that conceiving a plan correctly is not sufficient; you still need to implement it skilfully. All it takes is for one link in the plan to prove "rusty", and the whole chain comes apart.

White should have settled for 21.c3, with ♕c2 and the doubling of rooks to follow. With that move he would also be fulfilling a number of secondary tasks. Black's ideas based on a knight sortie to d4 would be extinguished; ...b4 could be answered by c3-c4; and finally, the pawn on c3 could restrict the activity of the black king's bishop.

21...♘d4

This sudden thrust is made possible by the presence of the white queen on the e-file.



22.♗xe7

White exchanges his best-placed piece for a knight which made a single move in the opening – and not a particularly effective move either. The decision to exchange on e7 was obviously prompted by White's wish to preserve his light-squared bishop at any cost. Yet this natural wish was not backed up by an analysis of variations, which would have convinced White that the bishop could not maintain itself on the a2-g8 diagonal. That being the case, was it worth preserving it at all?

The right continuation was 22.♘xd4 exd4 23.♕f4 ♘xd5 24.exd5 ♖e5 25.♗xd4 ♖f5! 26.♕g3 ♗xd4 27.♖xd4 ♕d8 28.♖g1 ♖b6. Black will win back one of the pawns, giving an approximately balanced position.

We should observe that 22.♘xe5 fails to 22...♘xd5, when Black wins a piece: 23.exd5 ♘f5 or 23.♕xd4 ♘f4!.

22...♖xe7 23.c3

An even worse option is 23.a3 c6 24.♗a2 b4, giving Black the attack.

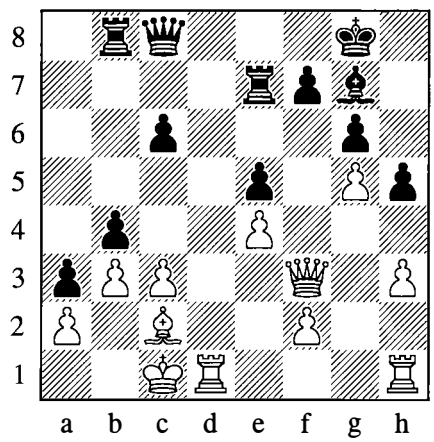
23...♘xf3 24.♕xf3 c6 25.♗b3 a4 26.♗c2 a3

Black is trying to remove the white pawn from c3 and thus create a weak square on d4; he will then try to use that square as a base for his rooks and also, if possible, for his bishop.

27.b3

Instead 27.♗b3 was tempting, but weak. There would follow 27...c5 28.♗d5 axb2† 29.♔xb2 c4!, and Black's attack down the a-file, supported from f8, is quite dangerous. White's bishop might seem to be well placed on the weak central square d5, yet its role in that position is negligible – because it is acting in isolation, without proper communication with the rest of White's forces.

27...b4



28.c4?

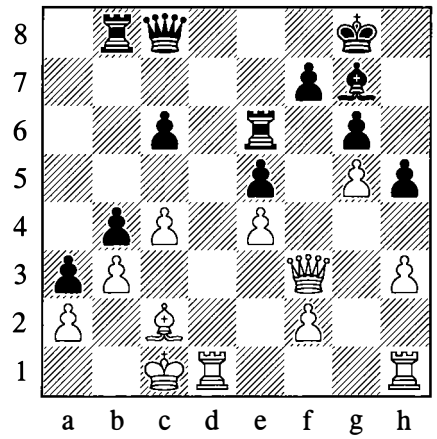
White supposes that with opposite-coloured bishops on the board, the closing of the position will lead to a draw; once again he contents himself with this reasoning of a general character. Yet a concrete examination of the variations would have convinced him that advancing his c-pawn was a weak move.

Several times during this game we have similarly seen White play moves that were not so much outright errors as simply mediocre, just because his choice of move was made on the basis of general principles. That applies to his 9th, 17th, 19th and 21st moves, as well as to this last one, his 28th. Of course there are positions where you do need to be guided by highly tentative perceptions of the merits of this or that move, but in most cases the matter is different. An evaluation of the position based on examining variations – that is, based on analysis – will always be more reliable, and will facilitate finding the correct course to attain the object of your plan.

White's last move may be considered a fatal error. His best response to the energetic assault on the dark-squared territory in his camp would have been 28.♗d3, and if 28...bxc3 then 29.♗c4. Black would retain the better position even so, but to some extent his actions would be constrained by the need to defend f7. It must be added that White's bishop is now condemned to perpetual incarceration in the midst of his own pawns.

28...♖e6

This begins the implementation of a plan which consists of four stages: occupying d4 with the bishop, and fortifying it on that square; preparing to open the f-file; taking control of this file with the major pieces; invading the opponent's camp and organizing a decisive attack on the king. Judging by White's reply, he has evidently not yet fathomed this project which will be so fatal to him.



29.♖d3

Can White really be aiming to double rooks on the d-file? Alas, little does he suspect that in three moves' time his rooks will find themselves in the same situation as his bishop.

29...♗f8 30.♖hd1

It doesn't help to play 30.♕e3, in view of 30...♗e7 followed by ...♕f8.

30...♗c5 31.♕e2 ♗d4

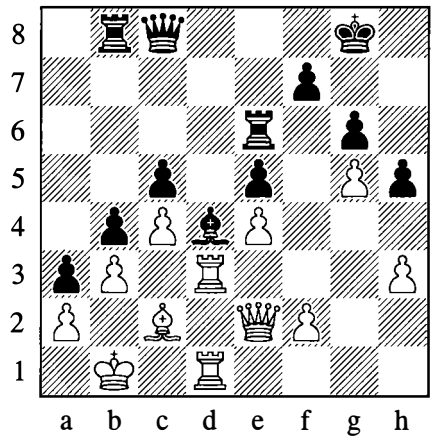
Not fearing 32.f4, because of 32...♗b2† and 33...exf4.

32.♔b1

White intends to endure the siege. This decision too is mistaken, as Black has at his disposal a realistic plan for breaking through.

It was better to sacrifice the exchange with 32.♖xd4 exd4 33.♖xd4, although even in that case the exploitation of Black's advantage would not prove a very complicated task. A logical continuation would be 33...♕c7! 34.♕d2 ♖ee8, with the decisive threat of ...♖bd8; on 35.♖d7, Black has 35...♕e5.

32...c5

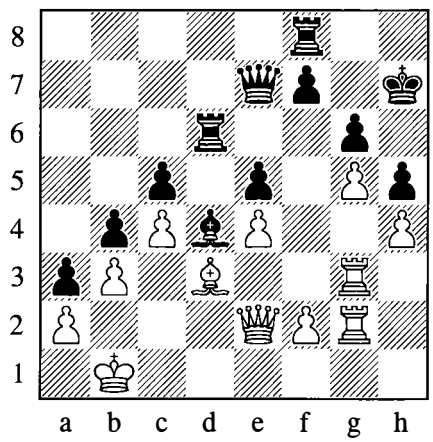


So the bishop is consolidated on the "permanent" square d4. But it can be exploited as a genuine force only if cooperation is established with Black's other pieces. And for that, Black needs to organize an invasion of his rooks into the opponent's camp. On the open d-file this obviously cannot be done. It is essential to open another file – in these circumstances, the f-file. But the move ...f6 requires preparation. The point is that it opens not only the f-file but also the g-file, on which the white rooks, with the support of the queen, may develop a dangerous counterattack against the g6-pawn, and consequently against the black king too. Black's attack on the f-file and White's counterattack on the g-file are liable to turn into a mighty battle of the six major pieces, with the bishops remaining idle. At the moment, Black needs – for one thing – to fortify his king position as a precaution, particularly the g6-point; secondly, he must arrange his major pieces in such a way that immediately after the pawn exchange they can apply their full force to the breakthrough by "forming up" on the f-file. The desirable way to prepare this formation is with the queen behind the rooks. The opening of the f-file turns out to be no simple operation, and the slightest carelessness may lead to the collapse of the whole plan.

33.♖f3

White has figured out his opponent's scheme. However, both by his rook move to f3 and by all the subsequent manoeuvres of his major pieces, he shows that he has not managed to form a plan of defence. After opening and occupying the f-file Black will be threatening to win the f2-pawn, which will be attacked four times while only three white pieces can protect it; and once this pawn falls, all the invasion squares (f1, f2, f3) will be open to the black rooks. For White, therefore, the relatively best defensive plan would be to move the f-pawn to f3, transfer the queen to g2, and vacate d1 for the bishop – which on that square would be one more defender for the f-pawn. This would not promise salvation for White, but it would to some extent complicate Black's process of exploitation.

33...♕d8 34.h4 ♕e7 35.♖g1 ♖f8 36.♗d3 ♔h7 37.♖fg3 ♖d6 38.♖1g2



38...f6

The second stage of Black's plan has reached its goal – the f-file is opened, and Black's major pieces will immediately occupy it.

39.gxf6

If White waits, say with 39.♔c2, Black continues with 39...fxg5 followed by play along the f-file, as in the game.

39...♖xf6 40.♖g5 ♕f7 41.♗c2 ♖f4 42.♖h2 ♖df6

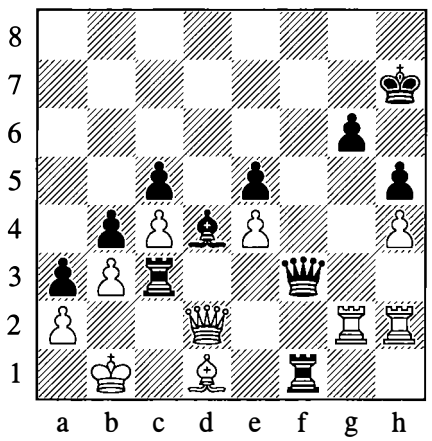
With this the third stage is completed, and the fight enters its concluding phase – the invasion, and Black's swift "kidnapping" of the white king.

43.♖gg2 ♗xf2

At last the bishop has entered into full contact with the rooks. This coordination signals a speedy end to the game.

44.♗d1 ♗d4 45.♔c1 ♖f1 46.♔c2 ♖6f3 47.♕d2 ♖c3† 48.♔b1 ♕f3

Black is obsessed with the process of invasion. He could have brought about instant capitulation by 48...♗e3. But White is soon mated anyway. The diagram depicts this apotheosis of planning achieving its end.



49.♖e2 ♖xb3† 50.axb3 ♕xb3† 51.♔c1 ♗b2†

And mate next move.

0–1

To conclude our review of this instructive game, we should like once again to recall the fundamental cause of White's defeat. We are not referring to individual weak moves or direct oversights, but to the very essence of his delusive thinking about the game. Viewing the

matter from this angle, we must perceive the fundamental cause in White's lack of a concrete approach to many of the positions that arose during the progress of the struggle. His assessment of the position was accompanied by too few variations, and this prevented him from anticipating, even approximately, the ensuing course of events on the board. Thus on move 28, White's c3-c4 shows that he had not at all foreseen the manoeuvre ...♗g7-f8-c5-d4. After the bishop had arrived on d4, he failed to weigh up the danger that this entailed, and instead of sacrificing the exchange at once, he allowed his opponent to play ...c5. If White had envisaged the consequences of the ...f6 break, he would of course not have allowed Black to construct a veritable fortress on the d4-square. In failing to approach the position concretely, White was essentially violating the principle of dynamic play. His thinking was undynamic – he was evaluating positions statically rather than in the light of the constantly unfolding progress of the fight.

Apart from this principal reason for White's mistakes, we should also point out that his resoluteness faded as his position deteriorated. Once you abandon yourself to your fate, your mind is virtually reduced to ticking over. Your will to resist slackens; indifference to the creative aspect of the game becomes apparent. In this game from 21...♘d4 onwards, White's play bore the noticeable stamp of demoralization, and after 29...♗f8 it looked utterly doom-laden.

A. Evenson – A. Alekhine

Philidor Defence
Kiev 1916

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♘bd7

This is one of the main variations of the Philidor Defence. The position of the knight on d7, however, cramps Black and makes it difficult for him to develop his queenside. For that reason, in our own day, a different plan of development has been evolved: 4...exd4 5.♘xd4 ♗e7 6.♗e2 0–0 7.0–0 a6 8.a4 c5 9.♘f3 ♘c6. So far, unfortunately, there has been little practical testing of it, so we cannot draw any conclusions, but at any rate the new plan has no less right to be adopted than the conventional theoretical line that Black chooses in the present game. In order to come out of this line successfully and reach a middlegame with broad scope, Black usually has some difficulties to overcome.

5.♗c4 ♗e7 6.0–0 0–0 7.dxe5

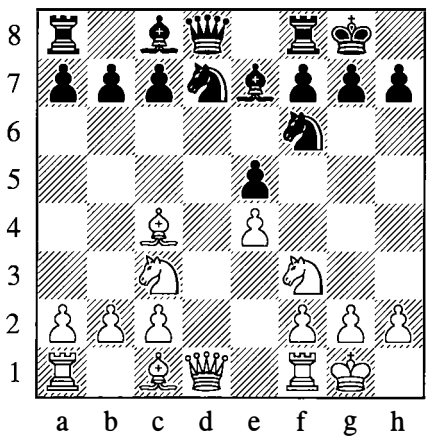
White had no reason to be afraid of the exchange ...exd4, which would merely strengthen his own position in the centre. All the same, Evenson's decision to open the d-file at once is easy to understand. The point is that 7.♕e2, the continuation established in practice and approved by the opening books, is justified only on the assumption that Black will make the reply that the books indicate – 7...c6. In fact, it is precisely after 7.♕e2 that the exchange on d4 opens up some interesting possibilities for Black – for instance 7...exd4 8.♘xd4 ♘e5 9.♗b3 c5 10.♘f5 ♗xf5 11.exf5 ♘c6 or 11...♕d7, with decent prospects.

The move to give Black the greatest difficulties is 7.h3, so that after 7...exd4 8.♘xd4 ♘e5 White can retreat with 9.♗e2, threatening an attack with f2-f4. Then 9...d5 can simply be met by 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xd5 ♕xd5 12.♘f5!, when White's position should be preferred. In addition, 7.h3 forestalls a knight sortie to g4 and thus gives the queen's bishop a secure square on e3. After ♗e3 White can move his knight away from f3 and play f2-f4 to mount a further attack on the e5-pawn. The continuation could be something like this: 7...c6 8.a4 ♕c7 (8...♘xe4 9.♘xe4 d5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.dxe5 dxc4 12.♘d6 gives White an edge) 9.♗e3 and Black is cramped, while

White threatens ♘h2 or ♘d2, with f2-f4 to follow.

Following Evenson's exchange in the centre, the rooks will gravitate to the only open file (the d-file); and if neither player manages to frustrate his opponent in this operation, we can expect multiple exchanges as the prelude to a drawish calm.

7...dxe5



White's plan is now obvious: to clear the way to the d-file for his rooks and try to double them there. The path to this goal is also clear. It consists of the moves ♕e2, ♗e3 or ♗g5, ♖fd1, a2-a4 (if necessary to prevent ...b5), and perhaps also h2-h3, so as not to allow ...♘g4 when the bishop is on e3, and also to avoid a pin by ...♗g4. A question remains, though: in what order should all these moves be played?

To answer this question White needs to visualize, as specifically as possible, the plan that Black will adopt in order to bring his rooks to d8 and neutralize his opponent's play in the d-file. To develop his queenside, it is essential for Black to free his queen's knight from defending the e5-pawn. The most convenient method is for the queen to give the pawn extra support from c7, at the same time as vacating d8 for the rooks. Thus 8.♕e2 c6 9.a4 ♕c7 10.h3 ♘c5 11.♖d1 a5 12.♗g5 ♗e6 13.♖d2 ♖ad8, and it's easy to see that White cannot dominate the d-file. It follows that 7.dxe5 has failed in its aim and was part of a mistaken plan.

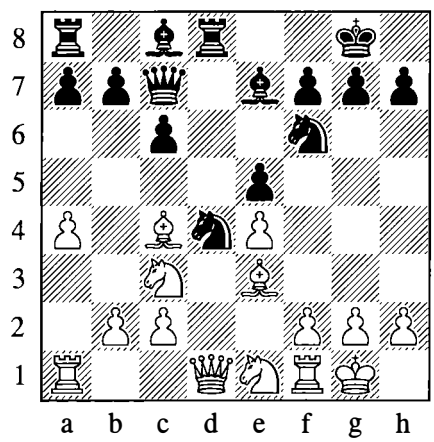
8.♗g5 c6 9.a4 ♕c7 10.♕e2 ♘c5 11.♘e1

Realizing that to occupy the d-file with his rooks would only lead to exchanges, White evidently shies away from a line with drawish prospects (which actually result from his own seventh move) and alters his plan. He is prepared to concede the d-file, relying on placing a knight on d3 as a barrier to stop the black rooks from penetrating. For his own part he aims to prepare an assault on the centre by f2-f4 with a subsequent opening of the f-file.

11...♘e6 12.♗e3 ♘d4 13.♕d1

Exchanging with 13.♗xd4 is even less appealing; after 13...exd4, White's other knight too has to retreat to the back rank.

13...♖d8



Black accepts his opponent's gift in the shape of the open d-file. His plan will consist of three parts: doubling rooks on this file and removing a white knight from d3; invading his opponent's territory; and exploiting the advantage obtained. Carrying out this plan will take over thirty moves – ten for the first part,

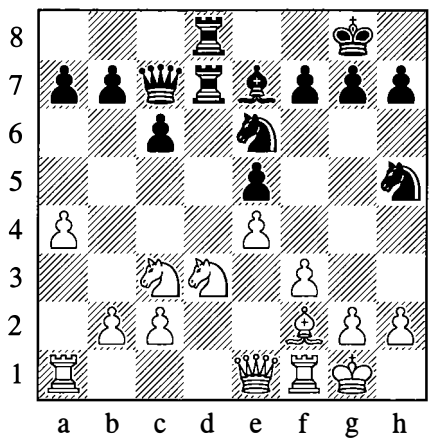
six for the second and twenty for the third. It turns out that the process of exploitation can be very lengthy and complex. In the preceding game (Vilner – Romanovsky) it took a few moves only, as the opponent was already subjected to devastation during the invasion process. Here, as we shall see, White retains significant resources for resisting even after the black rooks have penetrated.

14.♘d3 ♗e6 15.♗xe6 ♘xe6 16.♕e1 ♖d7 17.f3

This continuation testifies to White's decision to switch to defence for good; Black now executes his plan without hindrance, and slowly but surely takes over the whole board.

If White had continued consistently with 17.f4, Alekhine intended to answer with: 17...♘g4 18.f5 ♖xd3!? (After the less showy 18...♘d4, White's position is very bad.) 19.cxd3 ♘xe3 20.fxe6 (20.♕xe3 is unplayable owing to 20...♗c5) 20...♘xf1 21.exf7† ♔xf7 22.♕xf1† ♔g8 The position still favours Black; his threats of ...♗c5† or ...♕b6† followed by ...♖f8 are fairly unpleasant.

17...♖ad8 18.♗f2 ♘h5



The "hounding" of the knight on d3 commences.

19.♘e2 c5 20.b3 ♘hf4 21.♘exf4 ♘xf4 22.♘xf4 exf4

This concludes the first stage of the plan. The second stage – penetration along the open file – now begins. The invasion square (the weak square on the file) is d2. It is true that White can cover it with 23.♕c1 ♖d2 24.♗e1, but Black's chief threat, rather than the straightforward ...♖d2, is the preparatory ...c5-c4-c3.

23.c3

White forestalls the threat just mentioned and can answer 23...c4 with 24.b4, shutting off the c5-square – which might have been occupied to great effect by the black bishop. On the other hand White is creating one more weakness – the d3-square – on the open file.

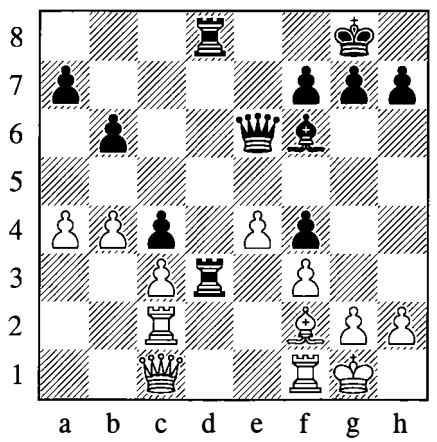
23...♕e5

Black's penetration on d3 is guaranteed; for the moment he improves the position of his queen and bishop.

24.♖a2 ♖d3 25.♖c2 b6

Threatening to win a pawn with ...♗f6.

26.♕c1 ♕e6 27.♕b1 ♗f6 28.b4 c4 29.♕c1



29...g5

Black sets about implementing the final part

of his plan. All his pieces are occupying ideal positions. True, the rook that has penetrated cannot itself deal the decisive blow, but by tying down White's forces it helps Black to undertake a series of actions that lead to the further deterioration of White's position. The kingside pawn offensive that Alekhine launches is probably the most energetic way of exploiting the advantage embodied by the fearsome and unassailable rook on the weak square d3.

30.h3 ♗e5 31.♕a1 h5 32.a5

White opens the a-file, but his opponent's attack develops at such a pace that there is no time to make use of this air vent. If Black had wanted, he could have denied White even this possibility, by playing 31...a6.

32...g4 33.axb6 axb6 34.♗h4 f6 35.♗e1 g3

Stifling the opponent for good. The final operation will consist in penetrating with the queen to e3 along the g1-a7 diagonal.

36.♕a6 ♕c6

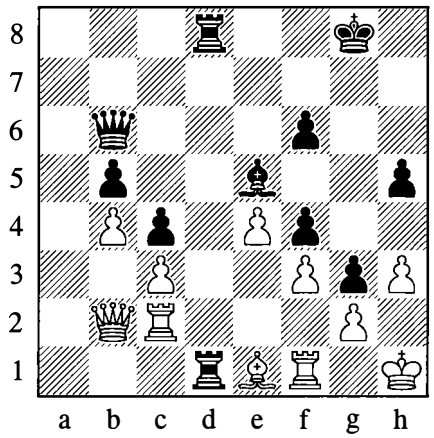
Threatening ...♖a8.

37.♕a3

The continuation 37.♖a2 ♗xc3 was also hopeless, just like everything else. White is reaping the fruits of two of his plans – those associated with 11.♘e1 and 17.f3. The consequences are ruinous, but then, pursuit of a false plan is truly the "kiss of death".

37...b5 38.♕b2 ♕b6† 39.♔h1 ♖d1

Not 39...♕e3 at once, because of 40.♖e2.



But now 40...♕e3 41.♖e2 ♕xc3 is the threat. There is no defence in 40.♖g1 ♕xg1†, nor 40.♖e2 ♖8d3 threatening ...♗xc3.

40.♖c1 ♕e3 41.♖a1 ♗c7 42.♕a2 ♖xa1 43.♕xa1 ♕e2 44.♖g1 ♗b6

And four moves later White resigned.

...0–1

Chapter 3

Play on the a-file

As a special topic we have singled out the issues of planning for play in the a-file in cases where both players have castled on the kingside. It is in those very cases that the play along this file acquires a specific character, calling for independent examination.

What are the peculiarities characterizing operations in the a-file when both sides have castled short? In the first place there is the maximum distance between the a-file and the kingside, which means that for a while the main events will not affect either player's castled position. But a more important point is that the player taking the initiative in the a-file needs to concentrate the bulk of his forces – and his rooks in any event – in or near that same file. In other words this operation entails removing a major detachment of pieces from the kingside. And this may prompt the opponent to aim for a strike in that direction. In that case it is most important to attend to protecting the kingside with a robust pawn chain and a minor piece contingent.

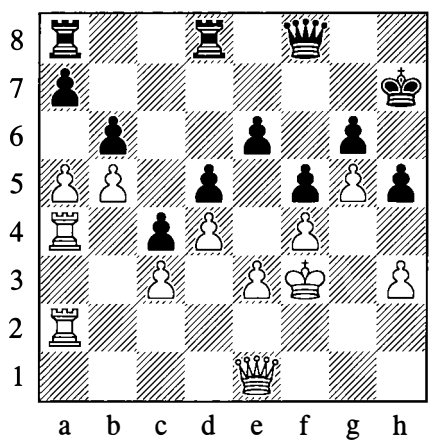
The technique for opening the a-file involves an exchange of a-pawn for b-pawn. This exchange is hard to bring about if the b-pawn is on its starting square. As a precondition it is therefore useful to provoke this pawn into advancing one or two squares. Needless to say, the plan for opening the a-file and invading along it has to be thought out thoroughly, with full attention to the specific positional environment. You need to consider if your opponent can advantageously prevent the opening of the file or undertake a counter-offensive on the kingside.

It goes without saying that when planning to play in the a-file it is imperative to ensure that the file, once opened, will be seized by your own rooks. That is to say that an appropriate regrouping of forces already needs to take place before the opening of the file.

The conclusion of the following game, played as far back as the end of the nineteenth century, can serve as an excellent example of the technique of invading along the a-file.

G. Marco – O. Müller

London 1899



White has prepared for the opening and seizure of the a-file, and one quite good idea in this position would be to capture on b6 at once. After 33.axb6 axb6 34.♕a1! ♖xa4 35.♖xa4 the a-file is left in White's hands, and in conjunction with the weakness of the pawns on b6 and e6 this should eventually decide the game in his favour. Nonetheless the reply 35...♖d7 would enable Black to defend quite tenaciously.

Marco chose the best possibility:

33.♕a1!

Threatening to play axb6 *next* move. In order not to lose a pawn, Black is compelled to remove his rook from a8, after which White seizes the a-file while keeping all the major pieces on the board. There followed

33...♖ab8 34.axb6 axb6 35.♖a7† ♔h8 36.♖c7 ♖a8 37.♖aa7 ♖xa7 38.♕xa7

With White's pieces doubled on the seventh rank, we may expect a swift dénouement.

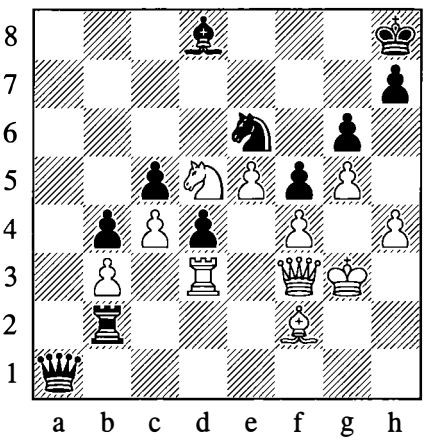
38...♖b8 39.♖h7† ♔g8 40.♖h6 ♕e8 41.♕h7† ♔f8 42.♖xg6
1–0

In this example there was initially a calm situation on the kingside. The blocked pawn chain shielded White's king from any trouble, allowing him to switch all his forces to the a-file.

In the following game the scene as a whole was rather different. Black succeeded in opening the a-file with the pawn march ...a7-a5-a4xb3 and then taking control of it and penetrating with his major pieces to the first and second ranks. While Showalter was engaged in all these operations, Lasker endeavoured, as far as possible, to make use of the time to create counter-threats against the enemy king – which was left on h8, under the protection of the pawn chain h7-g6-f5 and the knight on e6. In this game, a highly interesting one from the strategic viewpoint, White's 60th move brought about the following position which is not easy to evaluate.

Em. Lasker – J. Showalter

Nuremberg 1896



Storm clouds have gathered over White's king, but he too has possibilities of his own. If the superbly placed knight on d5 should go to f6, it will be clearing the h1-a8 diagonal for the queen. Penetrating along this path to b7 or c6, the queen will be able to create direct threats to *Black's* king.

Events unfolded in a sharp and interesting manner:

60...♖b1 61.♘f6 ♖h1

Threatening ...♕f1. Yet Black is reckoning without his opponent's dangerous counter-attack. He could reach a draw, but that is all, by playing: 61...♖g1† 62.♗xg1 ♕xg1† 63.♔h3 ♘xf4† 64.♕xf4 ♕h1† 65.♔g3 (65.♕h2? ♕f1†) 65...♕g1† 66.♔h3 ♕h1† etc.

True, 61...♖g1† may also be answered by 62.♔h2, but in that case 62...♖f1 63.♖d2 ♕e1 leads to a complex position in which Black appears able to defend. Now the showdown immediately ensues.

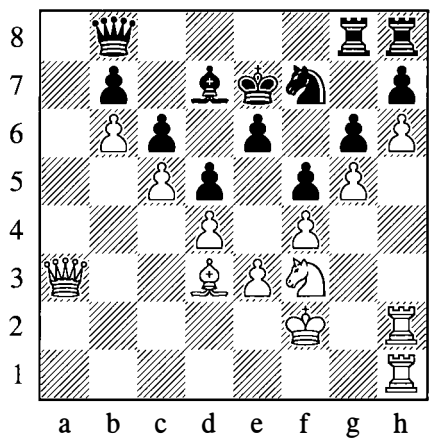
62.♕b7 ♘g7 63.♕f7 ♖g1† 64.♔f3!
1–0

Instead of 60...♖b1, did Black have anything stronger? He would have chances of winning with 60...♕c1. If then 61.♘f6, Black has a simple solution in 61...♕xf4† 62.♕xf4 ♘xf4. Indeed, after 60...♕c1 White is hard put to find continuations that don't lead to immediate loss, while Black has various means of improving his position: he can place his queen on c2 and his rook on b1, bring his knight to h5 and even play ...h6, with the idea of obtaining a winning attack by sacrificing his bishop on g5.

Some instructive examples of play on the a-file are to be found in games by Capablanca. In the following game White conducted a lengthy siege of his opponent's position and then succeeded, after closing the centre and the kingside, in opening the a-file and penetrating along it with his major pieces.

J.R. Capablanca – K.Treybal

Carlsbad 1929



White easily takes command of the a-file. Hemmed in by White's powerful chain of seven pawns on dark squares, Black is forced to keep to waiting tactics. The only question is whether White will be able to take advantage of the inevitable penetration of a rook to a7.

The game continued:

40.♖a1 ♖c8

40...♕a8 41.♕b2 is of no use to Black.

41.♕b4 ♖hd8 42.♖a7 ♔f8 43.♖h1 ♗e8 44.♖ha1 ♔g8 45.♖1a4 ♔f8 46.♕a3 ♔g8

White has invaded on the a-file and arranged his major pieces there in the ideal order, with the queen in the rear... but what next? The following manoeuvres with the king indicate that Capablanca has yet to devise a clear plan of action.

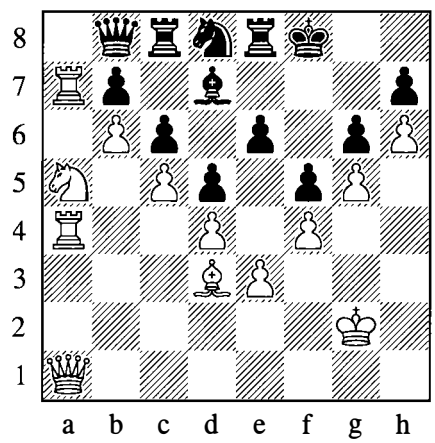
47.♔g3 ♗d7 48.♔h4 ♔h8 49.♕a1 ♔g8 50.♔g3

On h4 the king was badly placed; after the knight's departure from f3, sacrificial themes aiming at g5 would arise.

50...♔f8 51.♔g2 ♗e8 52.♘d2

Now everything is clarified. Black's pawn on b7 is weak, and the white knight heads for a5.

52...♗d7 53.♘b3 ♖e8 54.♘a5 ♘d8



55.♗a6! bxa6 56.♖xd7

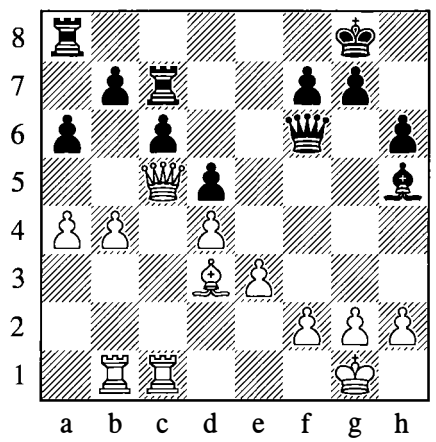
The seventh rank is incorporated into the invasion zone.

56...♖e7 57.♖xd8†!
1–0

From the finish of the game we can see that the decisive assistance to the rook on a7 was supplied by the minor pieces. The question arises whether White could have made use of his huge spatial plus and his invasion of the a-file if the major pieces had been the only ones on the board. Alas, no. He would have had nothing with which to attack the b7-pawn. The final phase of the next game may serve to confirm this answer.

J.R. Capablanca – A.Alekhine

World Championship (25), Buenos Aires 1927



26.b5 axb5

Forced; otherwise White exchanges on a6 himself, and invades along the b-file.

27.axb5

At first sight it even looks as if the a-file is in Black's possession, but this is mere outward appearance.

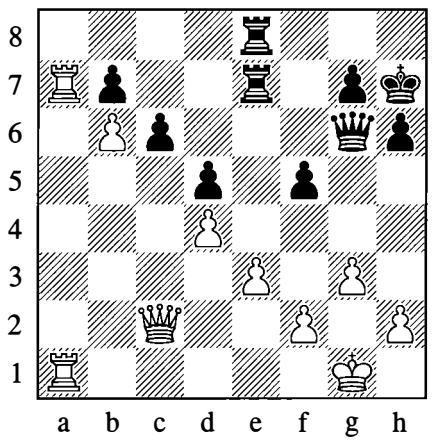
27...♗g6!

Anticipating future events, Alekhine forces the exchange of White's last minor piece, so as to make the b7-pawn easier to defend

28.♗xg6 ♕xg6 29.♖a1 ♖ac8

On 29...♖cc8, White would win a pawn by 30.♖xa8 ♖xa8 31.♕b6.

30.b6 ♖d7 31.♖a7 ♔h7 32.♖ca1 f5 33.♕c2 ♖e7 34.g3 ♖ce8



Black is threatening nothing in the e-file for the moment, but White for his part is unable to increase the pressure on the b7-pawn.

35.♖a8 ♖e4 36.♖xe8 ♖xe8 37.♖a7 ♖b8 38.h4 h5 39.♔g2 ♕e6 40.♕d3 ♔g6 41.♔h2 ½–½

Alekhine stated the opinion that instead of 26.b5 White ought first to have played 26.♖a1, to avoid the bishop exchange. In that case he would have more chances to utilize his queenside advantage, but retention of the bishops would also give Black some extra defensive resources – and in addition, by reason of the open character of the position, he could organize counterplay in the centre and on the kingside.

The examples we have examined are sufficient

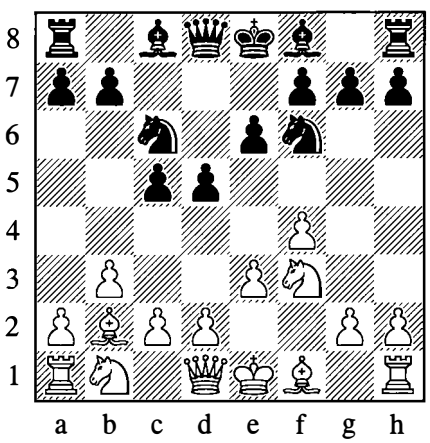
to establish that play on the a-file is mainly a plan for developing the initiative, comprising an attack on the opponent's queenside. Cases where the play on the a-file retaliates against the opponent's initiative on the kingside are rarer, but produce very sharp situations. Sometimes the a-file operation grows into a full-blooded counterattack, and if skilfully combined with measures to defend the king position, it may bring decisive success – especially when the opponent pursues his kingside attack too impetuously.

Let us turn to some material from practice.

P. Evtifeev – D. Daniuszewski

Bird's Opening
St Petersburg 1909

1.f4 d5 2.e3 c5 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.b3 ♘c6 5.♗b2 e6



White's plan in this opening is as follows: by taking firm control of e5, obtain a dominating position on the kingside; and then, after establishing cooperation between the bishop on b2, the queen and the king's rook (0–0, ♖f1-f3-g3/h3), launch a direct attack on the enemy king. From the point of view of countering this plan, Black has played the opening if not weakly, then at any rate innocuously. One of his best options is to develop his bishop on g7. Therefore instead of 3...♘f6, it was worth considering 3...g6. Black could also have waited with the development of his queen's knight, so as not to allow it to be pinned by ♗b5; or he could first have played ...a6 to prevent this pin.

6.♗e2

Undoubtedly a more consistent line was 6.♗b5 followed by exchanging the black knight; this would allow White to establish himself still more firmly on the central point e5. The need for a connection between the initial and middle phases of a chess game, within the terms of an overall plan, is brought home to us time and again.

6...♗e7 7.0–0 0–0 8.♕e1 b6 9.♘e5

To say the least, a premature foray. Both here and on the following move, White should prefer 9.d3; an exchange on e5 can only favour Black.

9...♗b7? 10.♕g3 ♘e4

Both sides are making moves in isolation, not according to a plan.

Instead of 10.♕g3 White first needed to play 10.d3, so as to be able to answer 10...d4 with 11.♘xc6 ♗xc6 12.e4.

Against 10.♕g3, Black could have taken the opportunity to start an attack in the centre with 10...d4. He may have been afraid of 11.♗f3, but he can continue 11...♘d5, and the following variations show that there was no reason at all for his "fright":

a) 12.e4 ♗h4 13.♕g4? f5 with a won position.

b) 12.♘xc6 ♗xc6 13.exd4 (13.e4? ♗h4 14.♕g4 f5 15.exf5 exf5 16.♗xd5† ♕xd5! with a decisive plus) 13...♗h4 14.♕h3 ♗f6, when

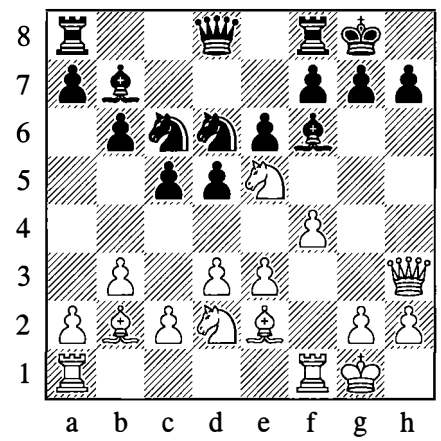
Black obviously stands better and holds the initiative.

c) After the better 12.c4! dxc3 13.♘xc3, the position is about equal.

What Black does instead, transferring his knight from f6 to d6 and his bishop to f6, is not bad either, but it only solves a partial problem.

11.♕h3 ♗f6 12.d3 ♘d6 13.♘d2

There are specific reasons why this natural and even indispensable move ought to have been postponed for a short while. As will be clear from the note to Black's reply, it would have been very useful at this point to play 13.g4, denying the enemy knight the f5-square.



13...d4?

Together with move 21, this is Black's most serious positional mistake in the game. Admittedly we cannot deny that there is some planning in his play. He is contemplating a broad pawn offensive on the queenside, with play in the a-file designated as the main theme. In this, however, Black is only very superficially taking account of White's attacking possibilities on the other wing; with his own last move, releasing the tension between the pawns in the centre, he is untying White's hands for action on the kingside. This mistake should have had fatal consequences.

Black had at his disposal the interesting possibility of 13...♗xe5. White would have to think hard before deciding what to recapture with.

On 14.♗xe5, Black plays 14...♘xe5 15.fxe5 ♘f5. Then 16.g4 is met by 16...♕g5!, while a good enough answer to 16.♗g4 is 16...♘h6. The exchange sacrifice 16.♖xf5 exf5 17.♕xf5 is dubious in view of 17...♗c8 or 17...♕e7.

The same notions also apply to the variation 14.fxe5 ♘f5 – except that in these circumstances the exchange sacrifice promises White rather more chances, since his bishop on b2 has been preserved. However, after 15.♖xf5 exf5 16.♕xf5 ♗c8 17.♕h5 ♘e7 Black's position is quite safe.

But none of this occurred, and Black's game began sliding downhill.

14.♘xc6 ♗xc6 15.e4 e5

On top of everything (though admittedly in the worse position already), this allows White to cut off all the black forces from the kingside and develop an irresistible attack against the king. A better move was 15...♗e7.

16.f5 ♗g5

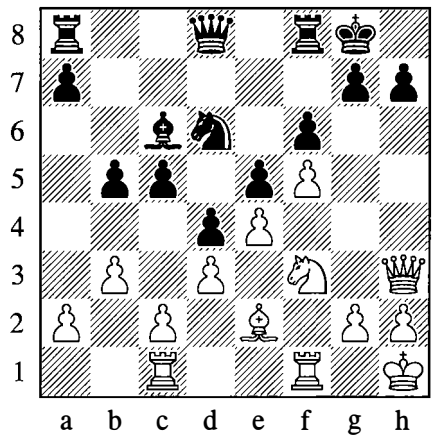
The bishop penetrates to the third rank, but alas, he will only be "Caliph for an hour" there.

17.♘f3 ♗e3† 18.♔h1 f6 19.♗c1 ♗xc1

Black couldn't maintain himself on e3. For instance if 19...♘b5 then 20.♘g1, and the bishop is attacked additionally by the queen.

20.♖axc1 b5

Black begins to implement his plan of attacking on the queenside. The immediate 20...a5 could have been met by 21.a4, but now he intends to undertake the march ...a7-a5-a4xb3. However, White's attack ought to achieve its aims more quickly.



21.♘h4?

In search of attractive fortuitous threats such as ♘g6, White evaluates the position falsely. The defensive barrier of black pawns on the kingside is not to be broken down by an attack with pieces alone. White is choosing an unrealistic plan; his project is not concrete enough. He should have played 21.g4, and if 21...♘f7 then 22.♕g3. An illustrative continuation is: 22...h6 23.h4 a5 24.♖f2 a4 25.♖g1 axb3 26.axb3 ♖a2 27.g5! hxg5 28.hxg5 ♖xc2 29.♖h2 fxg5 30.♕h3 ♘h6 31.♖xg5, with numerous threats.

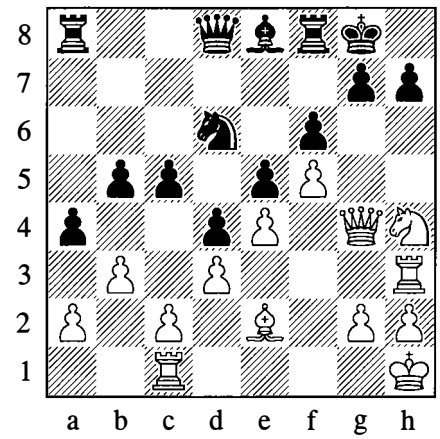
21...♗e8

The move ♘g6 would not achieve anything, assuming of course that Black declines the sacrifice. Black could therefore have played 21...a5 without loss of time. Sometimes a chess player's choice of move is to be explained by his style. Daniuszewski was an extremely cautious player who never missed a chance to strengthen his line of defence, even when there was no direct need for this.

22.♕g4 a5 23.♖f3 a4

Even Daniuszewski pays no heed to his opponent's "attack". White's plan is built on sand.

24.♖h3



White cherishes the dream of 24...axb3 25.axb3 ♖a2 26.♘g6 ♖f7? 27.♖xh7, or 26...♗xg6 27.fxg6 hxg6 28.♕e6† ♔h8 29.b4!.

With his reply Black puts paid to even these modest hopes, after which White's conglomeration of pieces on the kingside proves completely useless. Realizing that his plan of attack has failed, Evtifeev begins a retreat all along the line and hurriedly pulls back his pieces on the kingside. Meanwhile Black takes the initiative into his own hands and breaks into his opponent's position on the a-file.

24...♕d7! 25.♕g3 axb3 26.axb3 ♖a2 27.♕e1

White achieves nothing by 27.♘g6 ♗xg6 28.fxg6 h6 29.♗g4 ♕e7.

27...♕a7 28.♖f3 ♗f7 29.♖f1 ♖a8 30.♘f3

White's pieces have returned to the positions from which they set out on their attack nine moves ago! He has managed to avoid material loss but suffered serious positional damage. Black has opened and seized the a-file, and his rook has invaded on a2; he threatens to play ...c4 and extend his invasion along the second rank.

30...♕a5 31.♕d1 ♕c3

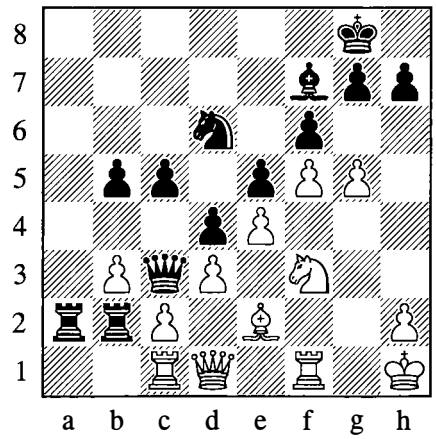
Played according to plan, but this is rather a slow way of exploiting his advantage.

A more energetic line was 31...c4 32.bxc4 bxc4 33.♖b1 ♕c3 34.♘e1 cxd3, or 33.g4 ♖b8 34.♖a1 ♖bb2.

32.g4

White goes into the attack eleven moves late and in circumstances incomparably less favourable than they were at move 21, but this is his final and only chance of salvation. Better late than never, as they say.

32...♖b2 33.g5 ♖aa2



A colourful and instructive invasion picture!

34.gxf6 gxf6 35.♘e1

White counts on sharpening the play with ♗h5.

35...♔f8 36.♖g1?

One of those sad mistakes that typically result from the excessive strain of the fight.

After 36.♗h5 Black would still have something to worry about.

Thus if 36...♗xb3, then 37.♕g4, and with the threat of ♖g1 White obtains an attack.

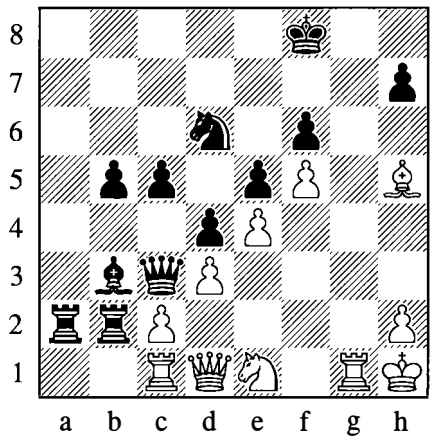
Black does better to simply continue 36...c4, although 37.♗xf7 ♘xf7 38.bxc4 bxc4 39.♖f2 keeps Black's advantage to a minimum.

36...♗xb3!

White had missed this reply. On 37.cxb3 Black plays 37...♖xe2, threatening mate in one move.

37.♗h5

To answer 37...♗xc2 with 38.♕g4.



37...♘xe4!

A beautiful and decisive stroke. Black threatens ...♘f2†.

38.dxe4

White had another move at his disposal – 38.♕f3. However, after 38...♗d5! 39.dxe4 ♕xf3† 40.♗xf3 ♗c6 he would be powerless to stop Black's queenside pawn avalanche in spite of his extra piece. For example, 41.♖g2 c4 42.♔g1 b4 43.♔f1 b3 44.cxb3 ♖xg2 45.♗xg2 c3 etc.

38...♗xc2 39.♘xc2 ♖xc2 40.♖xc2 ♕xc2 41.♕xc2 ♖xc2

An ending has arisen in which Black's three united passed pawns leave his opponent with no hope. Out of inertia, White continues to resist for a few moves.

42.♖b1 b4 43.♗d1 d3 44.♔g1 ♔e7 45.h3 ♔d6 46.♔f1 ♔c6 47.♖b3 ♖c3 48.♔e1 ♔b5 49.♔d2 ♖xb3 50.♗xb3 c4

0–1

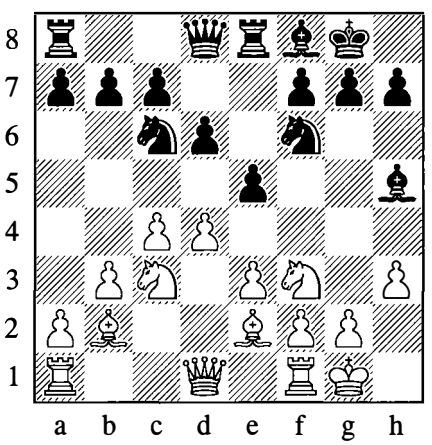
In this complex and interesting game, one feature calls for attention. Black's most serious mistake, which could have led him to defeat, was his 13th move, ...d4 – and yet the pawn on d4 was itself to be the very cornerstone of his successful pawn offensive on the queenside! Thus with a change of circumstances on the board, a bad move is converted into its opposite, and vice versa. This is just one instance of the "dialectics" that are an inseparable part of chess.

Let us look at one more game which, perhaps most vividly of all, illustrates play on the a-file and the dangerous consequences when the major pieces invade there.

M. Yudovich – V. Alatortsev

English Opening
14th USSR Championship semi-final, Moscow 1944

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 d6 5.d4 ♗e7 6.♗e2 0–0 7.0–0 ♖e8 8.b3 ♗g4 9.♗b2 ♗f8 10.h3 ♗h5



So far, strictly speaking, neither opponent has a plan that is properly thought out. They are both manoeuvring with circumspection, trying to concentrate the action of their pieces and pawns on the area around the central squares; their deeds are guided by notions of a rough-and-ready kind.

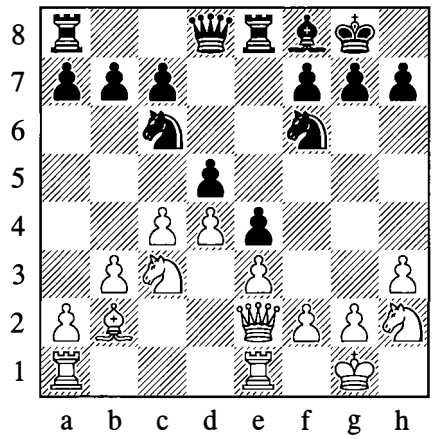
11.♖e1

Intent on his manoeuvring, White overlooks the loss of a pawn.

11...e4

Black could win a pawn as follows: 11...♗xf3 12.♗xf3 (To save the pawn White would have to play 12.gxf3, but after 12...exd4 13.exd4 d5 Black's advantage is worth more than a pawn.) 12...exd4 13.exd4 ♖xe1† 14.♕xe1 ♘xd4 15.♗xb7 ♘c2 16.♕d1 ♘xa1 17.♗xa8 ♘xb3 However, exploiting this gain would be very difficult after 18.♘d5! ♘xd5 19.♗xd5 ♘c5 20.♗d4. Perhaps Black wasn't content with a draw and avoided this line deliberately, aiming to create a potential weakness on d3 and limit the activity of the bishop on b2. This doesn't yet amount to a plan, but it does take the preparatory steps towards one.

12.♘h2 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 d5!



The white queen's bishop is now severely cramped. In the centre Black has succeeded in setting up a strong pawn outpost on e4; the deployment of his pieces is clearly superior, and there is a threat of ...♘b4-d3, establishing the knight on the weak square. The principal

events, however, are likely to take place in the centre.

The d5-square is the point on which the attention of both players should now be fixed. The pawn on d5 is supporting the e4-pawn, and if, after removing his knight from the c6-square, Black manages to play ...c6, this will considerably strengthen his central pawn group. Fortifying the centre and penetrating to d3 – this is what constitutes the first stage in Black's plan.

Accordingly, the immediate task for White is to obstruct these aims. He can increase the pressure against d5 by 14.♘g4. Since Black would be spoiling his whole plan if he replied ...dxc4, there remains only 14...♘xg4, whereupon White has at least three continuations – 15.♕xg4, 15.hxg4 and 15.cxd5 – leading to complex variations in which his opponent has a number of new problems to solve. For example: 15.♕xg4 ♘e7 16.cxd5 f5 17.♕e2 ♘xd5 18.♕c4 c6 19.♖ac1 etc.

Even 14.a3, barring the black knight's route to d3 – with the possible continuation 14...♘a5 15.♕c2 dxc4 16.bxc4 ♘xc4 17.♘xe4 ♘xb2 18.♘xf6† ♕xf6 19.♕xb2 ♕b6 20.♕c3 – would be better than what happened in the game.

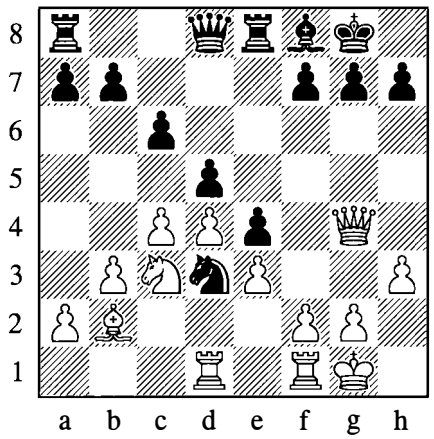
14.♖ad1

A planless move which doesn't pursue any aim and isn't based on a concrete scheme. It is additionally inadequate because it fails to stop the black knight's intrusion on the weakened d3-square.

What was the reasoning behind White's last move? It would seem that he simply decided to transfer the rook from the corner square a1, where it was idle, to the undoubtedly better central square d1.

There are situations (especially in the opening stage) where such a way of proceeding, based on general reasoning, is fully justified. Usually however, even in a strictly positional environment, there will be materials available for concrete play – for the setting and resolving of tasks based on the calculation of variations. This fully applies to the present game.

14...♘b4! 15.♖f1 c6 16.♘g4 ♘xg4 17.♕xg4 ♘d3



18.♗a1

White's position is considerably worse. The main point is that with the hostile knight right in the middle of his army, he is devoid of prospects. Therefore the courageous decision would be to sacrifice the exchange with 18.♖xd3 exd3 19.♕d1. The thorn in White's flesh would be removed, and he could offer stubborn resistance. Instead of this, he prefers to carry on in the same forlorn way.

18...g6 19.f4 f5 20.♕e2 ♗b4

With the intention of exchanging off the only piece capable of evicting the knight from d3, and thereby securing for himself a permanent knight.

20...b6 or 20...♕a5 would also have been good.

21.♕c2

As to this move, it is hard to let it stand without a question mark. Again White is

ignoring his opponent's designs and playing without a plan. It was essential to play 21.♘a4 (threatening ♘b2). Even so, Black can maintain a plus with 21...♕a5, preventing 22.♘b2 on account of 22...♕xa2.

21...♗xc3

After this exchange White's game can hardly be saved.

22.♗xc3 b5! 23.c5

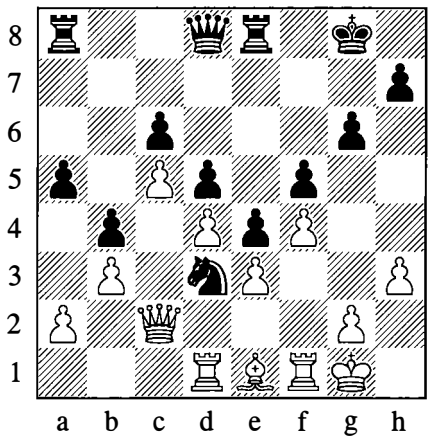
The opening of the c-file would only favour Black, who would have no trouble occupying it with his rooks.

23...b4!

Nailing down the b3-pawn; this is important for conducting an attack in the a-file.

24.♗e1 a5!

Black starts to implement the second stage of his plan – the opening of the a-file. White cannot prevent this; his only possibility of resistance lies in organizing an offensive on the kingside. Some slight resources for this (such as the move g2-g4) are available, though they are clearly inadequate.



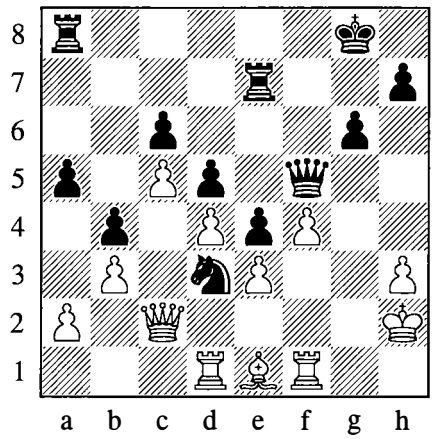
25.g4

Indeed White tries what amounts to his last chance.

25...♕d7

Black is going to combine active play on the queenside with the necessary prophylaxis on the kingside. This will not be difficult, as White's threats are very modest. Now Black himself is threatening to take on g4.

26.gxf5 ♕xf5 27.♔h2 ♖e7



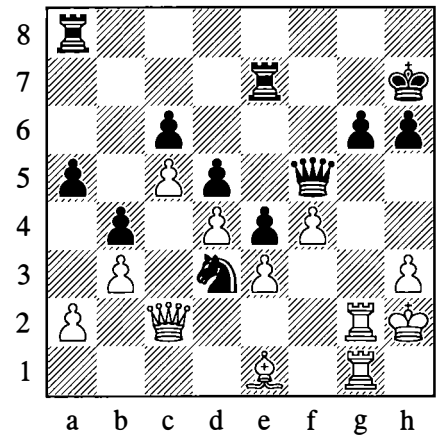
We should observe one more advantage that Black holds. The seventh and eighth ranks, which constitute splendid thoroughfares for transferring the rooks from one edge of the board to the other, enable him to utilize the powerful action of these mobile pieces to great effect. This freedom and speed of manoeuvre along the open ranks in your own rear can sometimes prove a decisive factor. In this respect White is much worse off. On the first rank there is congestion among his own pieces, and the second is also cluttered – while two squares on each of these ranks are denied to him by the black knight established on d3. We shall shortly see Black making good use of his advantage in the "rear".

28.♖g1 h6

The white rook is stopped from penetrating to g5.

The immediate 28...a4, and if 29.♖g5 then 29...♕f6, is also good.

29.♖d2 ♔h7 30.♖dg2



30...a4! 31.♗h4

Of course not 31.♖xg6 on account of 31...♘xe1 (or 31...♕xg6 32.♖xg6 ♘xe1!).

31...axb3 32.axb3 ♖ea7

Black begins the standard procedure of an invasion and its exploitation in the form of a flank attack against the king.

33.♕e2

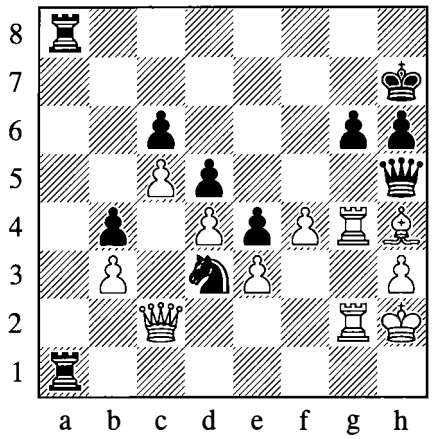
At long last White appears to have created a genuine threat – ♖xg6.

33...♖g8 34.♖g4

Why this move? After 34.♕g4 the struggle could still continue, whereas now the end comes with surprising speed. The final picture of the white army in total bondage will be quite striking, and characteristic of an attack from the flank.

34...♖a3 35.♕c2 ♖a8 36.♖1g2 ♕h5 37.♗g3 ♖a1 38.♗h4

Black's plan is accomplished! The harmonious action of his rooks is switched from the a-file to the first rank.



38...♖c1 39.♕e2 ♖aa1 40.♕d2 ♖h1† 41.♔g3 ♖af1

0–1

On 42.♖h2, Black could play 42...♖f3† 43.♔g2 ♖b1 and win the queen. But by now there is more than one path to victory.

Although we have given special attention to the breakthrough on the a-file with the major pieces, it is clear that the planning, technique and results of this operation are little different from breaking into the hostile army's position along any other file. Of course, there is also a certain distinction – especially in the processes of exploiting the invasion – between the way the fight is conducted when the breakthrough occurs at the edge of the board and when it is achieved on the central e- or d-file. In the latter case the rooks that have broken through need to act in the direction of both flanks, and sometimes this can even diminish the power of the breakthrough. After penetrating along a file at the edge, the attack with the rooks proceeds in the direction of a single flank, and hence becomes, so to speak, more concentrated and powerful.

Chapter 4

The Centre – Its Strategic Significance – Knights on e5 and d5 (e4 and d4) – The Pawn Centre – Attacking with the Centre Pawns – Hanging Pawns

The centre is the term for the part of the board comprising e4, d4, e5 and d5; these are called the centre squares.

The placing of a piece in the centre, from where it acts in several directions, can serve as the basis on which extremely active plans are constructed. Many and varied ideas and combinations have been implemented on this basis.

At the end of the nineteenth century the renowned American player Pillsbury was able to win a number of interesting games in which the source of his initiative was a knight established on e5. In the 1920s and 30s, a plan with the specific purpose of invading with a knight on the d5-square (d4 for Black) made a striking impression. The centralized knights, supported by pawns, would hamper the opponent's activities and guarantee a lasting initiative, bringing repeated successes to the exponents of such ideas.

Let us turn to Pillsbury's idea first of all. He introduced it into international practice at the Hastings tournament of 1895, in his games against Tarrasch and Schlechter.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5

The so-called Orthodox Variation of the Queen's Gambit. This variation is seen in our own day too, and hence continues to undergo development; yet in comparison with the end of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, its popularity has noticeably waned in favour of opening systems based on 1...♘f6. But then again it must be borne in mind that Black's methods of handling the Orthodox Variation have been significantly improved, and White no longer easily succeeds in attaining positional supremacy, as he did in Pillsbury's time.

4...♗e7 5.♘f3 ♘bd7 6.♖c1 0–0 7.e3 b6

This is how they nearly always played in the old days. In itself, the plan of developing the bishop on b7 looks entirely logical and arouses no objections of principle. But principles are one thing, concrete considerations are another. Pillsbury was the first to cast doubt on the method of play that was then generally accepted for Black. With the passage of time, the snags of ...b6 followed by ...♗b7 emerged more and more clearly.

Today, that method of development has decidedly given way to 7...c6, which has the aim of preparing a knight sortie to e4 (the immediate 7...♘e4 is unplayable owing to 8.♗xe7 ♕xe7 9.cxd5 ♘xc3 10.♖xc3 exd5 11.♖xc7). Moreover 7...c6 permits Black to answer 8.♗d3 by releasing the

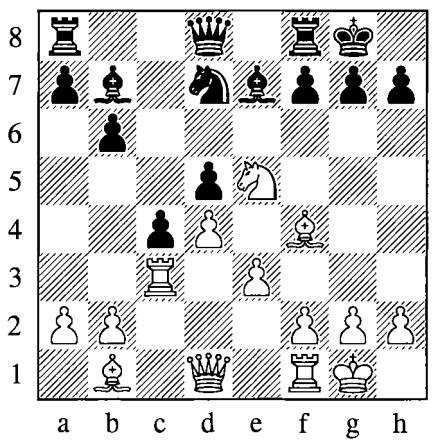
central tension in a favourable manner, with 8...dxc4 9.♗xc4 ♘d5. Practice has shown that by this means Black succeeds in surmounting the difficulties of developing his queenside.

8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.0–0 c5

At this point, in his game with Tarrasch, Pillsbury wasted a tempo on 11.♖e1 which allowed Black to seize the initiative after 11...c4 12.♗b1 a6 13.♘e5 b5 14.f4 ♖e8 15.♕f3 ♘f8 16.♘e2? ♘e4!.

Against Schlechter, he continued:

11.♗b1 ♘e4 12.♗f4 ♘xc3 13.♖xc3 c4 14.♘e5



This is in fact Pillsbury's starting point for a kingside attack founded on the position of the knight on e5.

From that time on, Pillsbury's strategic idea was frequently adopted by other players. Here are some examples, in which the knight's position on e5 was purposefully exploited.

R. Charousek – S. Alapin

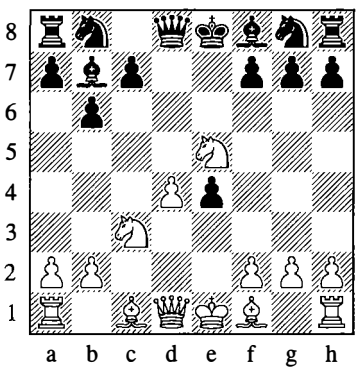
Queen's Gambit
Berlin 1897

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 b6

This continuation is even weaker here than at move 7.

4.♘f3 ♗b7 5.e3

In Pillsbury – Swiderski, Hannover 1902, the black knight's absence from f6 was exploited most energetically: 5.cxd5 exd5 6.e4! dxe4 7.♘e5!, with the threat of ♗c4.

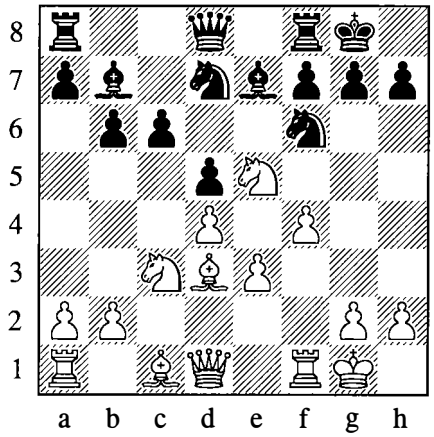


After 7...♗d6 8.♕g4! ♔f8 9.♗c4 ♗xe5 10.dxe5 ♕d4 11.♗d5!, White obtained a direct attack against the black king that was stuck in the centre; he had won the game by move 30.

5...♘f6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♗b5†

In terms of White's plan, the place for this bishop is the d3-square; the point of giving the check is to induce the reply ...c6, severing the contact between the black queen's bishop and the centre squares. A move like this, played to solve an individual problem in passing – not of course to the detriment of the plan you have conceived, but in furtherance of it – is called a *zwischenzug* (intermediate move).

7...c6 8.♗d3 ♗e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.♘e5 ♘bd7 11.f4



If White had not forced ...c6, Black could now play 11...♘e4, not without benefit to himself.

11...c5 12.♕f3

Of course if White's bishop were not on c1 but on g5, as was the case in games by Pillsbury, his position would be even more menacing. Black ought now to think about defending the h7-point, as after ♕h3 there will be threats hanging over it.

12...♘e8?

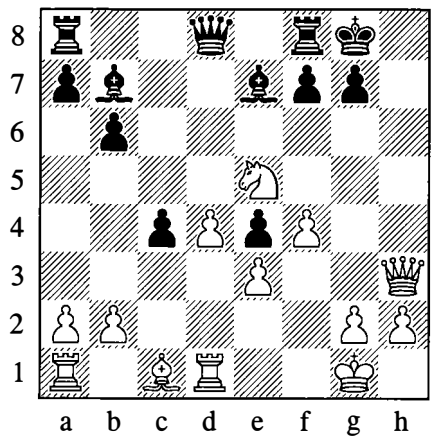
Black has thought up a complicated regrouping plan which involves bringing his king's knight to d6 and his queen's knight to f6, giving him control over e4 – but he has overlooked a small combination by which White gains a pawn.

Instead of mistakenly retreating his knight to e8, Black should have continued with 12...♖c8 or 12...a6, preparing an offensive on the queenside. He would meet ♕h3 with ...g6.

13.♗xh7† ♔xh7 14.♕h3† ♔g8 15.♕xd7 ♘d6 16.♕h3 ♘e4 17.♖d1 c4

A faulty plan. In this position the closing of the centre serves White's purpose, for now he can calmly concentrate his efforts on a kingside attack. Black should have exchanged on c3 and then prepared to play on the c-file.

18.♘xe4 dxe4



19.♗d2

There is no point in taking the c4-pawn at the cost of losing time and removing the white knight from its strong position. On 19.♘xc4, the continuation could be 19...♕c8 20.♕xc8 ♖fxc8 21.♘e5 ♖c2 (or 21...♗d5), when Black has a strong initiative despite being two pawns down.

19...♕c8 20.f5 ♗d6 21.♕h5 ♗xe5

Alapin is defending badly – as is the case, alas, with many players when they land in a difficult situation. Now White will have a mobile pawn phalanx which has crossed the frontier, and against which it will be hard to fight.

It was essential to parry the threat of f5-f6 by playing 21...f6 22.♘g6 ♖e8, with possibilities of stubborn resistance.

22.dxe5 f6

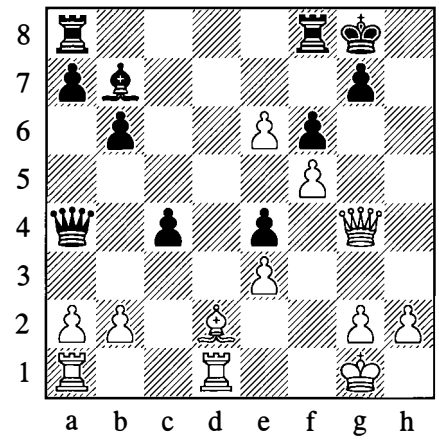
Allowing f5-f6 means quickly getting mated.

23.e6

A more convincing move is 23.♗b4. After the move played, Black could have prolonged his resistance by 23...♕c5.

23...♕e8 24.♕g4 ♕a4

Black had to resolve on 24...a5, and if 25.♗b4, then 25...axb4 26.♖d7 ♕xd7 27.exd7 ♖ad8.



25.♗b4!

Again a little combination that has escaped Black's attention. In this encounter Charousek has shown himself to be tactically much more acute that his opponent. The game is a good illustration of the significance of tactics in the chess struggle.

25...♖fd8 26.♖xd8† ♖xd8 27.♗e7 ♖f8 28.♗xf8 ♔xf8 29.♕h5 ♕e8 30.♕h8† 1–0

The knight on e5 made all the "spring weather" for White.

G. Maroczy – E. Schiffers

Queen's Gambit
Vienna 1898

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.♘f3 0–0 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.♖c1 b6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.0–0 c5

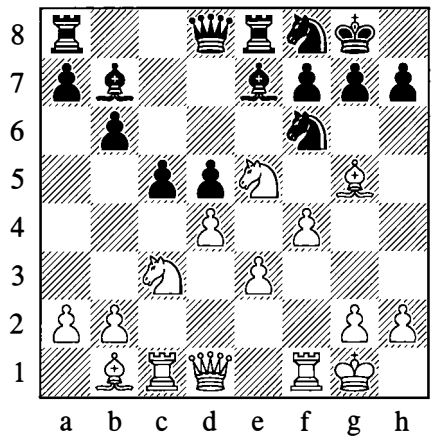
All this is familiar to us from Pillsbury's Hastings games with Tarrasch and Schlechter.

11.♗b1 ♖e8

In conjunction with the next move, this is an important manoeuvre to defend h7. At the same time, the rook itself joins the action.

12.♘e5 ♘f8 13.f4

The ideal Pillsbury formation.



13...♘e4

Black solves one particular problem by endeavouring to close the b1-h7 diagonal and thereby neutralize the influence of the white bishop that is stationed there.

However, not to mention the fact that the knight on f8 is already limiting the activity of the bishop on b1 to a sufficient extent, Black fails to detect the strategic "gist" of the position, which consists of the need to shatter White's knight outpost on e5. If you imagine the knight evicted from that square, then the weakness of the e3-pawn on the open e-file comes starkly into the picture, and the actions of Black's major pieces can be usefully concentrated on that file.

It follows that Black's plan should be to drive the white knight from its centralized position. The best attempt to go in that direction would be 13...♘6d7. The attack with 14.♕h5 could be repulsed by 14...g6, while after 14.♗xe7 ♕xe7 (or 14...♖xe7) 15.♕g4 f6 16.♘xd7 ♘xd7 17.♖ce1 ♕f7 Black's position is fully satisfactory.

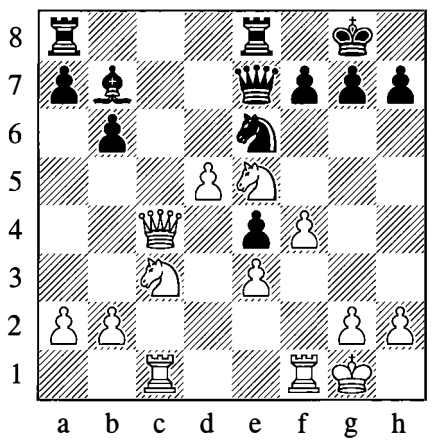
Thus 11...♖e8 initiated the correct plan of

playing against the knight on e5, but with his last move Black has strayed from the right path.

14.♗xe4! dxe4 15.♕b3 ♘e6 16.♗xe7 ♕xe7 17.d5 c4

Retreating with 17...♘f8 would condemn Black to a very constricted position after 18.♖fd1. To enable his forces to expand to some extent, he gives up a pawn, and for this decision he cannot be blamed. We can only observe that such critical moves as 13...♘e4 need to be more thoroughly thought out, and played only when they constitute links in a plan rather than an isolated tactical operation.

18.♕xc4



18...♖ac8?

He should have played 18...♘c5 or 18...♖ec8. It emerges that when Black sacrificed the pawn, he failed – once again – to take a sufficiently concrete approach to assessing the position.

If the reader recalls the principles for the methods of planning that were set out in the Introduction under the headings of "Concrete Scheme" and "Dynamics", he will surely blame Schiffers for his inadequately concrete projects, which led him to commit serious errors on moves 13 and 18.

The concrete approach to a position means thinking through the variations in detail, conceiving a realistic aim and clearly visualizing the paths that lead to it. Time and again – as in the present case – we perceive how very important to the creative process this approach is. This point ought to be the focus of attention for all chess players who wish to raise the quality of their thinking.

19.dxe6!

White wins two rooks and a knight for the queen. The stage of exploiting this material plus will not last long, especially since White also retains a significant positional advantage.

19...♖xc4

There was no consolation in 19...f6 20.♕b3 fxe5 21.f5 either.

20.exf7† ♔f8

The endgame after 20...♕xf7 21.♘xf7 ♔xf7 22.♘b5 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 is hopeless for Black.

21.fxe8=♕† ♔xe8 22.♘xc4 ♗a6?

Black has completely lost his bearings and no longer notices "trivialities".

23.♘xe4 ♔f8 24.♘cd6 h6 25.f5 ♕e5 26.f6 g5 27.♖c7 ♕d5 28.♖fc1 ♔g8 29.♖g7† ♔f8 30.♖e7 ♔g8 31.f7† ♔g7 32.♖e8
1–0

In all the games we have been looking at, the positions with a mighty centralized knight arose from one and the same opening – the Orthodox Queen's Gambit. This doesn't at all mean that the same idea cannot be carried out in other opening systems. The move ♘e5 is also included as a link in White's plan in other branches of the Queen's Gambit, and similarly (though more rarely) in quite different openings. By singling out the knight outpost on e5 in the Orthodox Variation, we merely wished to demonstrate the role

of the centralized knight by means of classic examples.

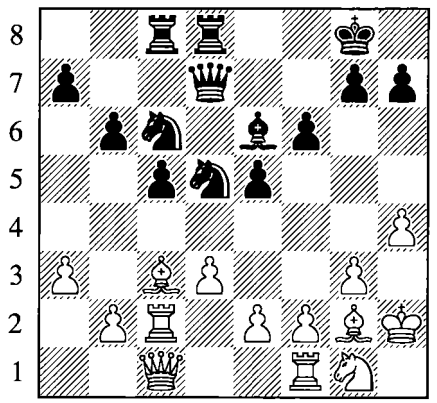
A relatively new idea is the stationing of a knight on the central square d5 (or d4 for Black). The first plans that were associated with this idea can be observed in games played at the start of the 20th century, but it gained widespread acceptance in the 1930s, especially after being employed with success in some games by Botvinnik.

Turning again to chess history, we will give two examples in which Black implemented an enterprising plan involving a knight sortie to d4.

In the first, a Sicilian with colours reversed led to the following position after White's 20.♘g1.

J. Mieses – M. Chigorin

Barmen 1905



Black's plan is to invade on d4 with his knight, compel his opponent to capture it, reply with ...exd4 and then begin an attack along the e-file against the pawn on e2. He has prepared this plan by advancing his pawns to c5 and e5 – and by fortifying them with ...b6 and ...f6, in case White should attack the vanguard pawns by b2-b4 or f2-f4. It should be observed that these "undermining" moves – that is what we will call them – are one of the basic methods of opposing such a plan.

The struggle continued with:

20...♘de7 21.f4 ♘d4

Black would have answered 21.b4 the same way.

22.♗xd4 exd4

Black threatens to penetrate with his knight via f5 to the weak square e3.

23.♗e4 ♗d5

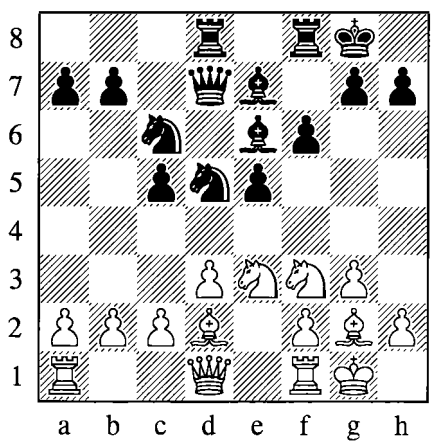
A more logical continuation of the plan would be 23...♗b3 24.♖d2 ♘f5 25.♗xf5 ♕xf5, followed by doubling rooks on the e-file. This line was indicated by Botvinnik. However, Chigorin's continuation also leads to the desired result. Black achieved victory on the 42nd move.

...0–1

A position very similar to the last diagram arose in the following game. The main difference is that White has a pawn on c2 instead of e2 (Mieses has exchanged with exd5, whereas cxd5 had occurred in the game with Chigorin) – and this difference is probably an additional point in Black's favour.

J. Mieses – M. Billecard

Ostend 1907



Without an open c-file, the undermining move b2-b4 loses its force and is harder to carry out anyway.

In the game, there followed:

14.♕e1 ♖fe8 15.♖d1

All White's pieces are bunched in the centre, but their deployment has no visible purpose and their harmony is purely superficial. White will soon come to feel the futility of "harmony for harmony's sake".

15...♗f8

The unfortunate position of the white queen could already be exploited by tactical means: 15...♘f4! 16.gxf4 exf4, and if 17.♘c4 then 17...♗xc4 18.dxc4 ♗d6.

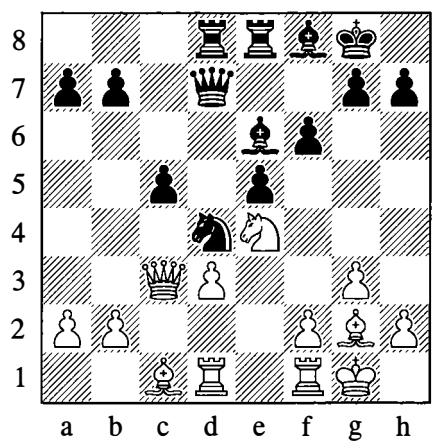
16.♗c1 ♘d4 17.♘d2?

The pawn could only be saved by 17.♕d2, but even then White's position would remain difficult.

17...♘b4

Of course 17...♘xe3 was also good.

18.♘e4 ♘bxc2 19.♘xc2 ♘xc2 20.♕c3 ♘d4



Mieses evidently realized only now that 21.♘xc5 would simply be answered by 21...♕b5, retaining two threats – the capture of the knight and ...♘e2†.

21.♖fe1 b6

White's position is hopeless, though he dragged out his resistance until the 44th move.

...0–1

Let us now see what plans along these lines, and what kind of technique for realizing them, were evolved in games from Soviet contests at a time closer to the present.

V. Kirillov – M. Botvinnik

English Opening
7th USSR Championship, Moscow 1931

1.c4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5

Since White has refrained from an early advance of his queen's pawn to d4, Black undertakes the analogous central operation first. He may already be forming the strategic plan of laying siege to the d4-square with the two pawn chains a7-b6-c5 and e5-f6-g7, and invading on that square with a knight.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗g2 ♘c7

This retreat reveals Black's true intentions. He is indeed preparing to carry out the plan outlined in the previous note.

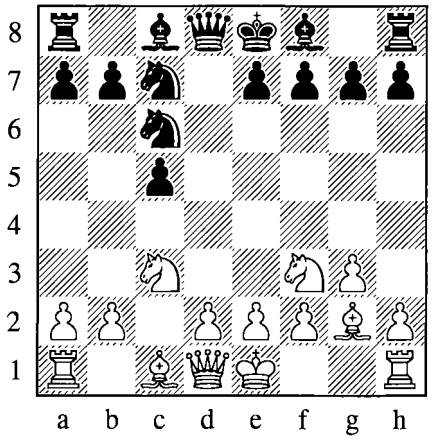
6.♘f3

A cunning continuation at this point is 6.d3, with a view to answering 6...♘c6 with 7.♗xc6†! bxc6 8.♕a4 and then attacking the c5-pawn with ♗e3, ♘e4, ♖c1 etc.

Instead of 6...♘c6, Black does better to settle for 6...g6 and 7...♗g7, continuing to concentrate his attention on the d4 point.

6...♘c6

This position was also to arise in many later games.



7.0–0

White's plan should consist of pressuring the c5-pawn with ♘a4, ♖c1 etc., in order to force ...b6 and thus increase the activity of his own king's bishop.

7...e5 8.b3 ♗e7 9.♗b2 0–0 10.♖c1 f6

Exactly the same position occurred 23 years later, in Taimanov – Korchnoi, USSR Championship, Kiev 1954.

11.♘e1

This passive retreat would be justified if White were to include the move ♗xc6 as one of the links in his plan.

Taimanov continued 11.♘a4 b6 12.♘h4 ♘d5 13.a3 (preparing b3-b4) 13...♗b7, and now he should have played 14.♘f5 threatening b3-b4.

11...♗f5 12.♘a4 ♘a6 13.♗a3 ♕a5 14.♘c2 ♖fd8 15.♘e3 ♗e6 16.d3?

The decisive mistake, allowing Black to carry out his whole plan of establishing a knight on the "commanding height" of the position – the point d4. It was essential to play 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.d3. The weaknesses on the c-file would to some extent hamper Black's potential activity on the kingside. In any event, to accept a weakening of your own position in return for creating genuine weaknesses in the enemy camp is better than relying solely on defence, thereby submitting to your opponent's will and completely surrendering the initiative to him.

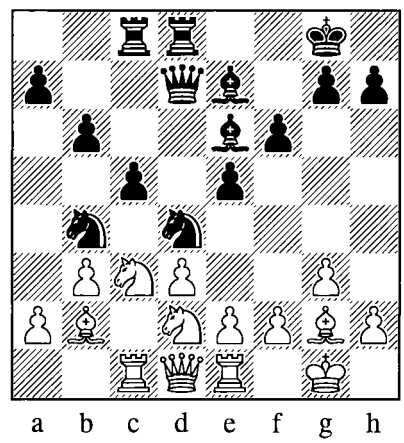
16...♖ac8 17.♘c4 ♕c7 18.♘d2 b6 19.♗b2

It's hard for White to decide on a goal for his manoeuvres – the first sign that the initiative has been seized by his opponent.

19...♕d7 20.♖e1 ♘d4 21.♘c3 ♘b4

The plan is accomplished, and the final stage of exploiting the positional advantage begins.

Botvinnik appraises the position as follows: "Black has attained the ideal deployment of his pieces and pawns. His knights are on unassailable posts, inasmuch as the moves a3 and e3 would only weaken White's position fatally."



22.♘f3?

This loses quickly, but also after 22.a3 ♘bc6 23.e3 ♘f5 24.♗f1 ♘a5 White should succumb sooner or later. For one thing, the manoeuvre ...♕e8-f7 is threatened.

22...♘xa2! 23.♘xd4 ♘xc3 24.♖xc3 cxd4 25.♖xc8 ♖xc8 26.e3 ♗b4 27.♖e2 ♗c3 28.exd4 ♗xb2 29.♖xb2 ♕xd4 30.♖a2 a5 31.♖a4 ♕c3 32.♖h4 ♕c1

0–1

G. Levenfish – G. Lisitsin

Sicilian Defence
Moscow 1935

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.♘f3 g6

Black steers the game towards one of the Sicilian schemes which has acquired the name of the Dragon Variation (the configuration of pawns recalls the pattern of stars in the Dragon constellation).

In the usual form of this variation the white c-pawn is on c2, but Black still endeavours to seize the centre by playing ...d5 – seeing that White's central pressure, even without a pawn on c4, is quite palpable. In the present case, there is all the more need for Black to play ...d5 instead of adopting a stereotyped arrangement of his pieces and pawns.

4.d4

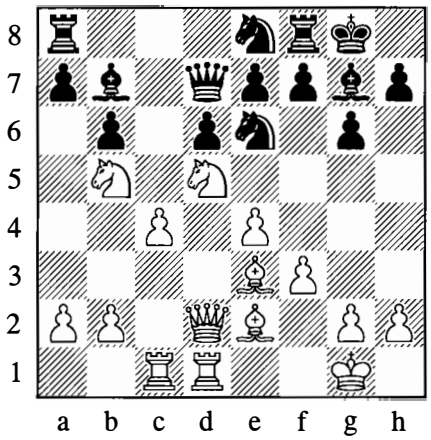
White pre-empts his opponent in the clash for the central squares. As from this moment, the game acquires an astonishing similarity to Kirillov – Botvinnik, with just the difference that Botvinnik's plan is implemented by Levenfish with the white pieces, while Kirillov's method of defence is repeated by Lisitsin with Black.

White now plays straightforwardly to set up a cavalry outpost on d5.

4...cxd4

It would still have been possible to complicate White's task by playing 4...♗g7 5.dxc5 ♕a5. Black, however, does nothing either now or later to stop his opponent from deploying his forces "*à la* Botvinnik".

5.♘xd4 ♗g7 6.e4 d6 7.♗e2 0–0 8.0–0 ♘bd7 9.♗e3 ♘c5 10.f3 b6 11.♕d2 ♗b7 12.♖fd1 ♘e6 13.♖ac1 ♕d7 14.♘db5 ♘e8 15.♘d5



At this point we cannot help glancing back at the position that arose after move 21 in the Kirillov – Botvinnik game. Levenfish's arrangement of his pieces and pawns is very similar to Botvinnik's, only Botvinnik had advanced his pawn to b6 whereas Levenfish's b-pawn is still on its starting square.

An interesting point is that Levenfish already obtained this characteristic set-up before his 16th move, while Botvinnik only reached it before his twenty-second. The explanation is that Botvinnik's queen took three moves to reach d7 while Levenfish's arrived at d2 in one; Botvinnik's knight crossed over from g8 to b4 in five moves while Levenfish's went from g1 to b5 in three; and finally, Botvinnik's bishop took two moves to get to e6 while Levenfish's reached e3 in one go.

It is notable that for Kirillov these five moves went to waste; we can understand why Lisitsin's position is more defensible than Kirillov's. Many a player will squander a crucial element of the struggle – the element of time – in this way, without realizing it. Be economical with time – this precept handed down by Morphy, Chigorin and Alekhine should be laid at the foundation of enterprising chess thought.

15...♘8c7 16.♘bc3

Under cover of his menacing knight outpost, White intends to launch an attack with

f3-f4-f5, or f3-f4 with e4-e5 to follow. Sticking to waiting tactics would be dangerous for Black, so he resolves to capture the knight on d5, even though this leads to new weaknesses being created in his own camp.

16...♘xd5 17.cxd5 ♘c7 18.a4 ♗a6

A positionally unjustified exchange, decisively weakening the c6-square – towards which White's pieces will indeed be heading before long. In general Black should be playing more actively, or he will just be gradually squeezed to death. He should be thinking about forming a plan involving the undermining move ...f5 or the advance of his e-pawn.

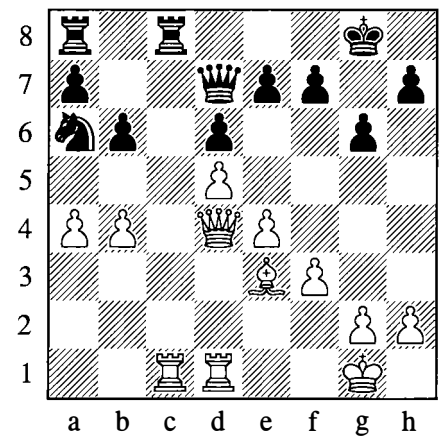
19.b4 ♗xe2 20.♘xe2 ♘a6 21.♘d4 ♗xd4

This is the kind of exchange that it pains you to make, but the knight cannot be allowed onto c6. Not that things are pleasant even now; the c6-square is not so much a gaping hole as a veritable abyss.

22.♕xd4

Threatening ♗h6.

22...♖fc8



23.♖c6!

The task is accomplished. Black can't allow White to conquer the c-file, so he is compelled to exchange on c6. Thus, after a slight diversion to d5, the modest little pawn on c2 that commenced its march on the first move of the game has landed at c6 and placed a bayonet against the opponent's heart.

23...♖xc6 24.dxc6 ♕e6

It's easy to see that the passed pawn on c6 has been created as the result of the knight's invasion on d5.

Proceeding from one stage to the next, White's plan enters the phase of exploiting the assets acquired.

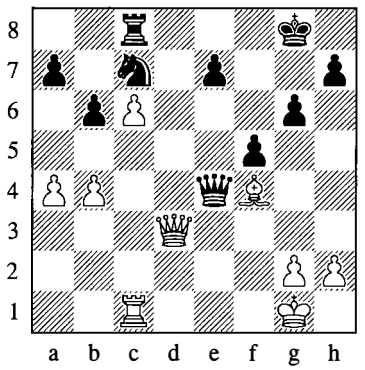
25.♕c3 ♘c7 26.♖a1 ♖c8 27.♕d3

Now and next move, the obvious 27.b5 was more precise.

27...d5 28.♖c1 f5 29.♗f4! dxe4 30.fxe4 ♘e8

It turns out that after 30...fxe4 White wins the knight by 31.♕d7.

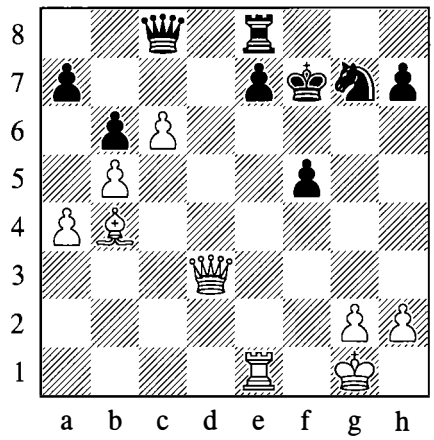
30...♕xe4 is rather more complicated:



a) After 31.♕d7 Black has an ingenious resource in 31...♔g7!, and if 32.♕xc8? then 32...♘d5!, going over to the counterattack. White would need to exert himself a little to find the continuation that preserves his advantage: 32.♖d1! ♘d5!? 33.♗g5!

b) White has a safer option in 31.♕xe4 fxe4 32.♗xc7 ♖xc7 33.b5, when the c6-pawn is a huge asset in the rook ending.

31.exf5 gxf5 32.b5 ♔f7 33.♖f1 ♘g7 34.♗d2 ♖f8 35.♖e1 ♕c8 36.♗b4 ♖e8



The black pieces are tied down, and White ought to win with no difficulty. However, at this moment, evidently suffering from time trouble (the time control at the tournament was 37 moves in 2½ hours), White mistakenly went into an endgame with:

37.♕d7?

The winning line was 37.♕d4, with the threats of ♗xe7 and ♗c3. The best reply, 37...♕c7, would be met by 38.♗c3 and then 38...♘e6 39.♕d5, or 38...♘h5 39.♕h4, or finally 38...♖g8 39.♕c4† ♔f8 40.♗b4.

37...♕xd7 38.cxd7 ♖d8 39.♖xe7†

After the transition to the ending the game loses its interest for our theme. Lisitsin continued resisting quite stubbornly and laid down his arms only on the 62nd move.

...1–0

Let us look at one more game that vividly illustrates the role of a centralized knight on d5.

M. Botvinnik – A. Lilienthal

Reti Opening
Moscow 1936

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 ♗b7 4.♗g2 c5 5.0–0 g6

A good plan that was employed frequently and successfully in the 1925 international tournament at Marienbad (Mariánské Lázně). Directing the crossfire of his bishop pair onto the centre, Black threatens to gain a preponderant influence there. This forces White to assent to an exchange of light-squared bishops, which results in a certain weakening of his castled position.

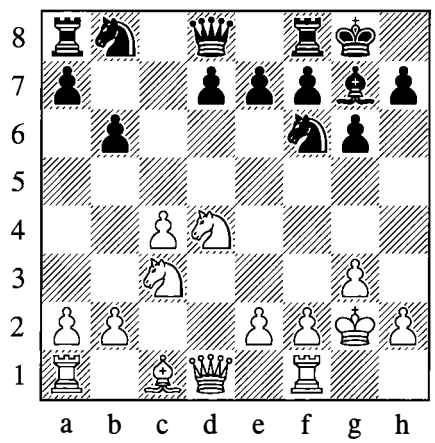
6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♗xg2 8.♔xg2 ♗g7 9.♘c3

White prepares to play e2-e4 so as to occupy the d5-square.

9...0–0

With this move and his next, Black ignores his opponent's plan and thus reveals his own insufficiently concrete appraisal of the situation.

About two and a half months later, the same position occurred in Capablanca – Botvinnik, Nottingham 1936. The latter played 9...♕c8, attacking the c4-pawn. There followed 10.b3 ♕b7† 11.f3 d5 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 ♕xd5 14.♗b2 0–0 15.♕d3 ♖d8 16.♖fd1 ♘d7, and a draw was agreed at move 29.



10.e4!

White immediately takes advantage of his opponent's routine play (with his last move Black was "completing" his development). The plan of invading with a knight on d5 assumes realistic contours.

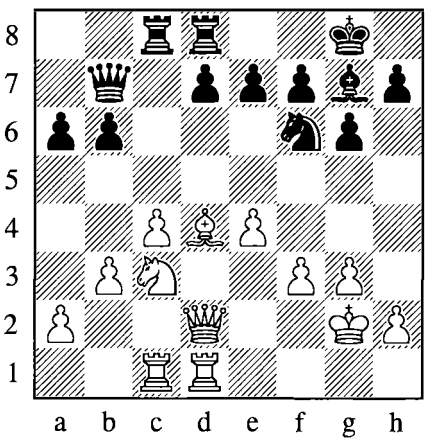
10...♘c6

[Editor's note: Here Black ought to take a more concrete approach to solving his problems. At the end of the 1970s, the following variation was discovered: 10...♕c7 11.b3 ♘xe4! 12.♘xe4 ♕e5, regaining the piece with a satisfactory position.]

11.♗e3 ♕c8 12.b3 ♕b7 13.f3 ♖fd8 14.♖c1 ♖ac8 15.♕d2 a6

Preparing ...b5, in order to take some of White's pressure off the "critical" point d5 (the object of his plan). After opening the c-file, Black wants to bring about a confrontation of major pieces there, giving a new direction to the struggle.

16.♖fd1 ♘xd4 17.♗xd4



17...d6

Black has a difficult position. With the immediate 17...b5 he would be carrying out his idea, but he would then run into difficulties after 18.♗xf6 and 19.♘d5, threatening e4-e5. He must therefore look for another prophylactic move before resolving to advance his b-pawn, and this allows White to take appropriate measures against that advance. With 17...e6 Black can take control of the d5-square, but after 18.a4 he again comes to a dead end – since 18...d5, as is quite easy to see, leads to the loss of a pawn, while the points f6 and d6 will serve as fresh objects for White's attack.

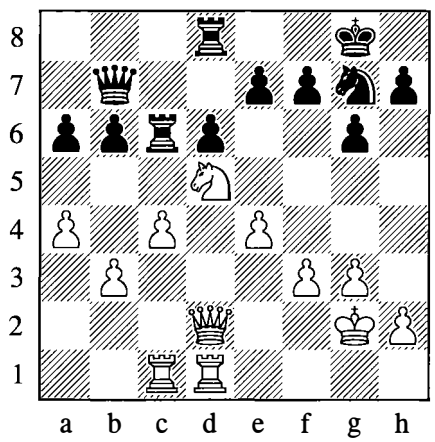
18.a4 ♘e8

Black's plan is hard to understand. The bishop exchange merely increases White's kingside chances. In addition, the knight is virtually being excluded from the events on the queenside, and Black is definitively conceding the point d5 to the white knight.

Undoubtedly 18...♘d7 would have been more active. On reaching c5, the black knight would perform functions for both attack and defence.

Finally, Black could also opt for a tactical plan with 18...h5, and if 19.♘d5 then 19...♘xd5 20.exd5 e5 21.dxe6 fxe6, when the play becomes sharper in view of the possibilities on the f-file, although after 22.♕e3 it's hard for Black to defend his numerous weaknesses.

19.♘d5 ♖c6 20.♗xg7 ♘xg7



White has fulfilled the basic part of his plan: he has penetrated to d5 with his knight and secured its central position more or less solidly. Can we assert that he has gained a positional advantage? Of course!

From a number of examples, we have already convinced ourselves of the importance of a knight that has firmly settled in the centre. But the knight's invasion of d5 is not an end in itself; it is merely an important step towards the final stage of the plan – the exploitation of the advantages gained.

At the moment, then, White is faced with the question of how to utilize the strong position of his knight. On the queenside it is hard to see what operation he could launch under the knight's aegis. On that side of the board, White should merely be taking care that Black doesn't carry out the break with ...b5 "on the sly". Obviously White's best chances lie on the kingside, or in the centre with a possible opening of the e-file.

Interestingly, 21.e5 is possible at once. Black cannot take the pawn, on account of ♘xe7† or ♘f6†. The best if not the only defence would be 21...♘e6, when play might continue as follows: 22.♖e1 dxe5 23.♖xe5 ♖cd6 24.♕h6 b5, and counter-chances gradually materialize for Black.

In the game, White proceeds more subtly. He endeavours to tie the black knight to the g7-square.

21.h4

Now if the knight moves away to e8 or e6, White plays h4-h5.

21...♖e8!

Black has guarded against the threat of e4-e5, which would have gained even more in strength now that White has played 21.h4. At this stage White has to immerse himself in thought once again, to decide how to utilize the assets of his position.

22.♖c3 ♘h5

Probably with a view to eliminating White's central knight by ...♘f6, even at the cost of significantly weakening Black's own pawn structure.

23.♕d4

To prevent ...♘f6, White would have to play 23.♖d3.

23...b5?

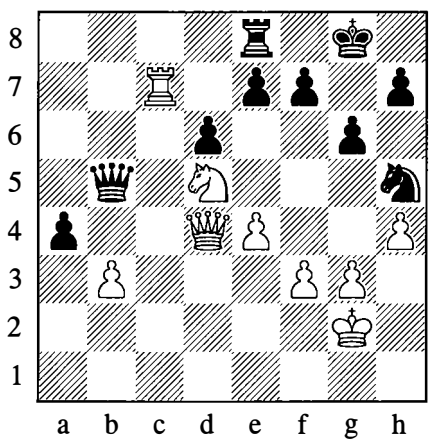
A mistake. Black could have played 23...♘f6, as the variation 24.♘xf6† exf6 25.♕xf6 is bad for White in view of 25...d5!. The correct reply to 23...♘f6 would be 24.♖dc1 or 24.♖e1, when ...b5 is unplayable as before.

While preserving his positional plus, White now acquires a material advantage as well. Black's premature decision to provoke a crisis in the struggle was evidently caused by the psychological instability brought on by the difficulties of prolonged defence.

24.cxb5 axb5 25.♖dc1! ♖xc3 26.♖xc3 bxa4

If 26...e6, then 27.♖c7 with ♘e7† to follow.

27.♖c7 ♕b5



28.bxa4

White prefers to take the game into an ending that is relatively simple to win, instead of having to worry about his opponent's passed pawn after 28.♘xe7† ♖xe7 29.♖xe7 axb3. However, Black's king and knight are so badly placed that the win would be quick and uncomplicated even then. For instance, 30.♖c7! threatens not only mate but also ♕b2 followed by ♖c3. White meets 30...♕e2† with 31.♕f2, and the b3-pawn falls. On 30...♕b8, he has the decisive 31.♕c3.

28...♕e2† 29.♕f2 ♕xf2† 30.♔xf2 e6 31.♘b6

Black resigned on the 44th move.

...1–0

We have seen from a series of examples what a mighty positional role is played by a knight that has established itself on one of the centre squares.

However, the "centralized knight" theme amounts to only one part (and not the main one, either) of the problem of the centre as a whole. In this area our principal attention must be given to the questions of central pawn play.

As far back as the nineteenth century, the leading lights of that epoch, with Steinitz at their head, formulated the crucial positional concept of the "pawn centre" and revealed its immense significance for the implementation of active plans in the middlegame phase.

A pawn centre is the term denoting pawns arranged on the centre squares e4 and d4 (e5 and d5).

When two centre pawns stand side by side, four squares on the next rank are grasped within their sphere of influence. Thus the presence of a pawn centre on one side or the other signifies certain territorial gains; this cramps the opponent to some extent, and in specific circumstances can guarantee a formidable attack. An advance of the pawn centre sometimes wreaks veritable havoc in the enemy camp, especially when counterattacks against the vanguard contingent prove futile. Harmonious cooperation between the pawns and the army of pieces is what gives the pawn centre its strength. If the establishment of knights in the centre required pawn support, the pawns in this case need the support of the pieces.

As the pawn centre advances, it loses touch with its own rear and comes closer to superior enemy forces. For this reason the aggressive march of the centre pawns is a highly critical operation which has to be weighed as accurately and thoroughly as possible. Failure, which usually takes the form of destruction of the vanguard group, is virtually tantamount to defeat. Success, on the other hand, in most cases guarantees victory in the game.

The following variation of Alekhine's Defence may serve as a good illustration of the strength and weakness of a pawn centre that has forced its way forward.

1.e4 ♘f6

Black consents to hold up his own development while in return he makes the white centre pawns lose contact with their own main forces, significantly weakens the central squares in the enemy camp and opens up the position of the white king.

2.e5 ♘d5 3.c4 ♘b6 4.d4

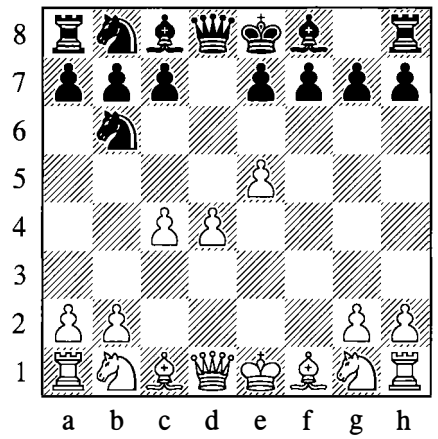
If White's pawn were on e4 his pawn centre would be stronger, and Black's position would be more cramped. From this we can see what positional snags a pawn advance can involve.

4...d6 5.f4

Consistent, but White is opening up his king still further and weakening the central squares

e3 and e4. On the other hand, the influence of his central pawn chain embraces several squares inside his opponent's territory. If he could manage to maintain his pawn centre and finish his development, he would achieve an overwhelming advantage – but Black is quick to organize an attack against the weak pawns, and the struggle takes on an extremely sharp character.

5...dxe5 6.fxe5



6...c5

Black himself compels his opponent's centre pawns to advance. A well investigated theoretical continuation is 6...♗f5, yet it is precisely in that line that White succeeds in stabilizing the position with his pawn group in the centre, and Black has to manoeuvre for a long time in a very restricted space. This makes planning very difficult for him.

7.d5 e6 8.♘c3

8.d6 is unsatisfactory, if only because of 8...♕h4†

8...exd5 9.cxd5

White's pawn centre has reached the fifth rank and still continues to be mobile. In a number of games, however, Black succeeded in averting the danger that could threaten his king.

9...♕h4†?!

[Editor's note: The main continuation is 9...c4.]

10.g3 ♕d4

Black has surrounded and attacked the pawns that have pushed forward. The intensity of the struggle has reached its limit.

11.♗b5† ♗d7

If Black tries 11...♔d8 12.♗g5† ♗e7, then 13.♘f3 gives White the advantage.

12.♕e2!

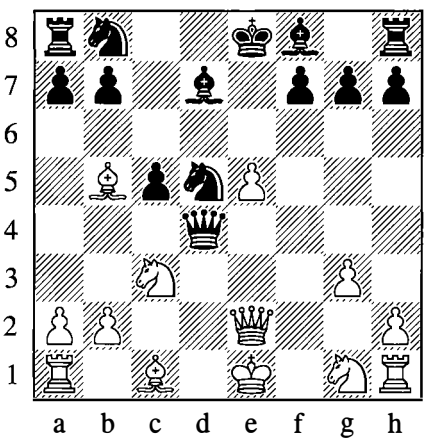
The best continuation of the attack, and one that probably wins.

In some games White played 12.♗xd7†? and lost, owing to the weakness of his pawns.

12...♘xd5

It was because of this very capture that White's last move seemed bad.

Incidentally we should note that 12...a6 fails to 13.e6 ♗xb5 14.exf7† ♔d8 15.♗g5† ♔c7 16.♘xb5† axb5 17.♗f4†.



13.e6!

Now Black's position collapses.

13...♗xb5 14.♘xb5 ♕b4† 15.♗d2

And White's attack after 15...♕xb2 16.exf7† ♔xf7 17.♕h5† is irresistible – for example: 17...♔e6 18.♘f3! ♕xb5 19.♕e5† ♔d7 20.♕xd5† ♔c8 21.♘e5! ♕b6 22.0–0–0

From what has already been said, it is clear that the plan for fighting against a pawn centre can be divided into two stages: first curb the centre's mobility, then organize an attack on the centre once this first task is accomplished. It is appropriate to note that with the centre blockaded, the play may be transferred to the flanks. The best thing of all is not to allow your opponent to set up a pawn centre at all, especially one with a pawn on a half-open file.

A pawn centre is such a vital positional factor that the fight for it begins right from the first moves of the opening. The side taking the initiative in this fight is usually White, seeing that he can station one of his pawns in the centre with the very first move of the game. In Black's opening plans, the strategy is mainly aimed at establishing equilibrium between the centre pawns of the two sides. Hence it is a highly complex operation for White to create a pawn centre if Black follows his actions attentively. This is what occurs in the French Defence (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5, and equilibrium comes about already); in the Sicilian (1.e4 c5, taking care of d2-d4; if now 2.c3, then 2...♘f6 or 2...d5, resolutely impeding White's plan); in the Nimzo-Indian (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4, and Black successfully hinders the formation of a white pawn centre; he still has ...d5 in reserve); and in many other openings.

Despite this, there are cases where White (or indeed sometimes Black!) ultimately succeeds in creating a pawn centre. Here are some examples from practice.

M. Botvinnik – G. Levenfish

Queen's Gambit Accepted
Moscow 1935

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4

In the Queen's Gambit Accepted Black has the possibility of entering the middlegame with a more or less acceptable position, but he needs to have an excellent understanding of the difficult problem of the centre. The point is that once the black pawn has departed from d5, the construction of a white pawn centre becomes a threat. Tarrasch even regarded the move 2...dxc4 as *surrender* of the centre, and in his writings he constantly gave it a question mark. That, of course, is a dogmatic verdict. Black has several ways of hindering the advance e2-e4, and moreover the availability of the undermining moves ...c5 and ...e5 means that the position of the d4-pawn is less than fully stable. Of course the replies 2...c6 and 2...e6, fortifying the d5-pawn, make it easier for Black to fight for the centre, but they lead to a relatively quiet game in which he has difficulty obtaining chances for counterattack – whereas 2...dxc4 permits a sharpening of the struggle. In the tense conditions created by the acceptance of the gambit, Black can utilize a range of tactical motifs.

Thus if White plays directly for a pawn centre with 3.e4, he achieves nothing on account of 3...e5 (4.dxe5 ♕xd1† 5.♔xd1 ♗e6 followed by ...♘c6, with hope of seizing the initiative).

In Capablanca – Rabinovich, Moscow 1935, Black answered 3.♘c3 with 3...a6, and after 4.a4 e5! he achieved a good, promising position.

3.♘f3 ♘f6

A struggle over e2-e4 begins.

4.♕a4† c6

By threatening ...b5 to defend his pawn, Black compels his opponent to lose time capturing it. On 4...♘bd7 White plays 5.♘c3, after which e2-e4 cannot be prevented.

5.♕xc4 ♗f5! 6.♘c3 ♘bd7 7.g3 ♘e4 8.♗g2 ♘d6

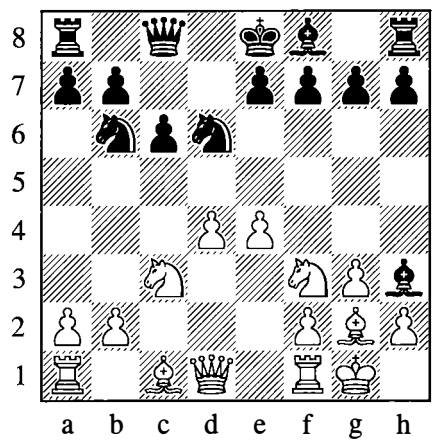
A tempting decision, but the fight against e2-e4 is now made more difficult. The answer to 8...♘df6 would be 9.♘e5, and again White would be coming closer to his cherished aim of advancing the e-pawn. Black's most successful way of opposing this aim is 8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 e6.

9.♕a4 ♘b6 10.♕d1 ♕c8

An unwarrantable loss of time. Black should play 10...g6, developing his kingside.

11.0–0 ♗h3 12.e4

At last!



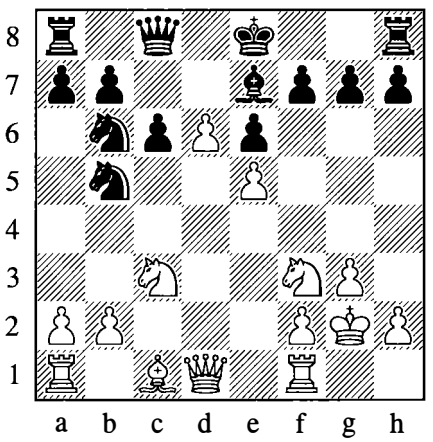
12...♗xg2 13.♔xg2

Black's situation is not easy. White has set up his pawn centre, and his army of pieces threatens to mobilize in its wake. Black is way behind in development (not surprisingly, since five of his first nine moves were made with his knights), and his king has lingered in the centre – it all announces that things are coming to a head.

13...e6 14.d5

The question whether to open up the game without delay, or to carry on systematically increasing the pressure with the support of the pawn centre, is a purely strategic problem. Both plans are justified, and the choice between them in this position depends rather on the player's style and creative tastes.

14...♗e7 15.e5 ♘b5 16.d6



And White's advantage is obvious. Admittedly the process of exploiting it was still to take quite a long time.

...1–0

The next game is a vivid illustration of how a pawn centre influences the entire arena of the struggle.

E. Geller – V. Simagin

Queen's Gambit
19th USSR Championship, Moscow 1951

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6

A classical position of pawn equilibrium in the centre.

4.♘f3

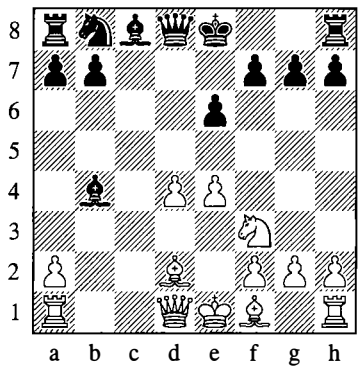
White has a wide choice of moves here. The one that continues along the orthodox path in this variation is 4.♗g5.

4...c5 5.cxd5

Either this or 5.e3. Otherwise the equilibrium of pawns will be disturbed in Black's favour – for example: 5.♗g5 cxd4 6.♘xd4 e5!

5...♘xd5 6.e3

White can form a pawn centre at once by playing 6.e4. However, after 6...♘xc3 7.bxc3 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♗b4† 9.♗d2, multiple exchanges occur, which is not to everyone's liking. Nonetheless the presence of a white pawn centre does present Black with some difficulties.



In Alekhine – Euwe, World Championship (18), Netherlands 1937, the continuation was 9...♗xd2† 10.♕xd2 0–0 11.♗c4 ♘c6 12.0–0 b6 13.♖fd1 ♗b7 14.♕f4 ♖c8 15.d5! exd5 16.♗xd5 ♕e7. And now with 17.♕f5, threatening ♘g5, White could have obtained a wealth of attacking chances. Instead Alekhine played 17.♘g5, and Euwe defended ingeniously with 17...♘e5 18.♗xb7 ♘g6!.

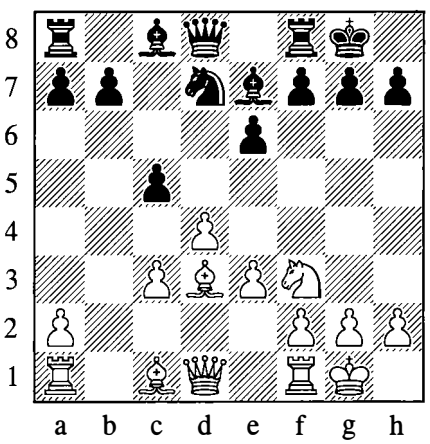
By playing 6.e3 White is not renouncing the plan of building a pawn centre, but he wishes to carry it out under more favourable conditions.

6...♗e7 7.♗d3 ♘xc3

An interesting moment. If you consider this exchange as a tactical operation in isolation, it has to be condemned. It did indeed incur disapproval from the game's annotators, on the grounds that Black is, for one thing, strengthening White's central pawn group and making it easier for him to form a pawn centre; and secondly, the b-file is being opened, which enhances the active possibilities for White's pieces on the queenside.

And yet these arguments do not justify censuring Black's exchanging operation, which is an essential component of the plan he has in mind. Relying on the "d4-c5" pawn tension (tension between pawns means a situation where they are attacking each other), Black intends to concentrate his major pieces on the c-file and then work up play on that file after capturing on d4 at a suitable moment. It does not pay White to resolve the tension himself with dxc5, since the point c4 and the c3-pawn would then prove to be positional weaknesses in his camp, exposed to the opponent's attack. It follows that in evaluating a move we must first of all establish whether it forms a link in a plan, and only then examine its immediate tactical significance for the current position.

8.bxc3 ♘d7 9.0–0 0–0



10.e4

White asserts his rights to the centre, but at present the advance 11.d5 is not a danger to Black. He would answer it with 11...e5, and White's king's bishop would be restricted in its actions by his own pawn chain. True, White would acquire a well fortified passed pawn in the centre, but Black's pieces (specifically his knight) would be able to blockade it effectively on d6, exerting strong pressure on the enemy position at the same time. However, White is not obliged to play d4-d5. He has achieved a pawn centre, and under its cover he can attempt to work up play on one of the flanks. To counterbalance this, Black should try to organize an offensive in the c-file.

10...b6

This move fits in with Black's plan, but he plays it at the wrong moment. He ought first to have played 10...♕c7, to prevent the white bishop from developing on f4. At the same time, the queen move would contribute to fulfilling Black's main task – concentrating his fire on the c-file.

11.♗f4 ♗b7 12.♕e2

Black now has nowhere to put his queen, and he experiences difficulties on that account.

12...g6

A good idea – transferring the dark-squared bishop to the long diagonal, so as to increase the influence of Black's pieces on the centre, and in particular to attack the d4-pawn.

13.♖fd1 cxd4?

After this, Black's 7...♘xc3 *can* be resolutely condemned, as he abandons the tension between the pawns without having first made suitable preparation for seizing the c-file. It will soon become clear that White, not Black, will occupy the open file, and with the pawn centre in his possession he will easily gain positional superiority.

The consistent continuation would be 13...♗f6, not fearing 14.dxc5 on account of 14...♘xc5 15.e5 ♕c7. True, White could reply 14.♗d6, and Black would have to return his bishop to e7 – but this would be adequate to counter White's sortie.

14.cxd4 ♗f6 15.♖ac1

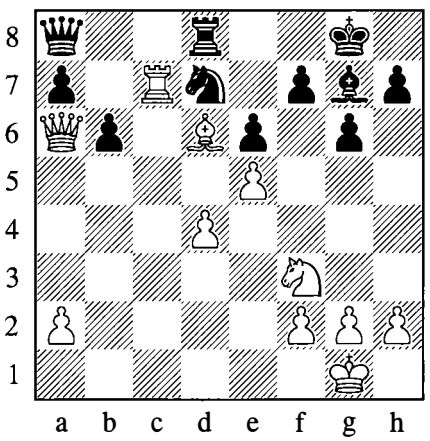
The rook's penetration to c7 threatens to cause big trouble – and Black can only delay it, not prevent it.

15...♖c8 16.♗a6 ♗xa6 17.♕xa6 ♖xc1

With 17...♖a8 Black would be conceding the c-file under even worse conditions. White's response would not be the immediate 18.♖c7 on account of 18...e5, but first 18.♗d6.

The simple 18.♖c2, to double on the c-file, would also be good.

18.♖xc1 ♕a8 19.♗d6 ♖d8 20.e5 ♗g7 21.♖c7



White has obtained everything he wanted: he has occupied the open file, and penetrated along it into the opponent's position; he has invaded the sixth rank with his bishop; he has taken over the centre and achieved harmony in the actions of his pieces. All these woes have befallen Black as the result of the fault in his planning on the 13th move.

21...♕e4

Of course this foray with the lone queen cannot help Black's cause.

22.♘d2

He couldn't play 22.♖xd7 because of 22...♕b1†, but now this combination will be a threat to Black.

22...♕e1† 23.♘f1 ♘f8 24.♕xa7 ♗h6 25.♖xf7

White's pieces inflict utter devastation along the 7th rank. Black continues resistance more out of inertia than anything else.

25...♕b1 26.♕e7 ♖c8 27.♖xh7 ♘xh7 28.♕xe6† ♔g7 29.♕d7† ♔g8 30.♕xc8† ♔g7 31.♕c7† ♔g8 32.e6
1–0

Let us now look at one more illustration of a breakthrough by a central pawn phalanx. Not only highly instructive but also brilliant in form and content, it was a product of the creative inspiration of Alekhine.

S. Tarrasch – A. Alekhine

Blumenfeld Gambit
Pistyan 1922

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 c5 4.d5 b5

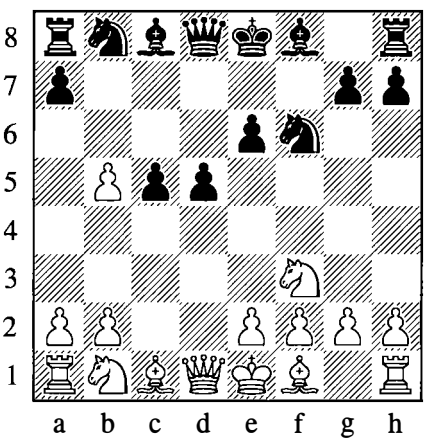
The scheme that underlies this sudden pawn sacrifice is Black's endeavour to create a mobile pawn centre. We might say that a positional advantage (the pawn centre) is placed in confrontation with a material one (an extra pawn).

Actually, practice has shown that rather than accept the sacrifice, White does better to continue 5.♗g5. By pinning the knight, he gives support to the d5-pawn that is cramping Black, and threatens to set up a central pawn phalanx of his own after e2-e4.

In Dus-Chotimirsky – Levenfish, Moscow – Petrograd match 1922, Black tried defending with 5...bxc4, but after 6.e4 ♗a6 7.♘c3 ♕a5 White could have set his opponent insurmountable problems with 8.♕d2. For example if 8...d6, then 9.dxe6 fxe6 10.♗e2 ♗e7 11.0–0 0–0 12.e5 dxe5 13.♘xe5 with an overpowering initiative.

Black also suffered a reversal in Grünfeld – Bogoljubow, Vienna 1922, when after 5...h6 6.♗xf6 ♕xf6 7.♘c3 b4 8.♘b5 ♘a6 9.e4 he tried taking the b2-pawn with his queen and quickly lost. By continuing 9...e5 in order to close the game (10.d6 ♗b7), Black could have offered resistance, but his position would still have remained very constricted.

5.dxe6 fxe6 6.cxb5 d5



7.e3

A very passive plan, whereby White simply develops his pieces without a thought of resisting the main item in Black's scheme – the advance ...e5.

Black's task would undoubtedly be made more difficult if White were to play 7.♗g5 here.

Regaining the pawn with 7...♕a5† 8.♕d2 ♕xb5 would not be good in view of 9.e4.

In the event of 7...♘bd7, White could play 8.♘bd2; and if 8...e5?, then 9.e4.

7...♗d6

Of course! The pawn sacrifice has fully justified itself. Black achieves the advance of his e-pawn with no trouble, and arranges his bishops on adjacent diagonals where they will harmoniously rake the centre and White's castled position on the kingside. After the pawn march ...e6-e5-e4 the knight on f3 will have to look for another place of refuge, after which the points h2 and g2 will become real weaknesses.

8.♘c3 0–0 9.♗e2

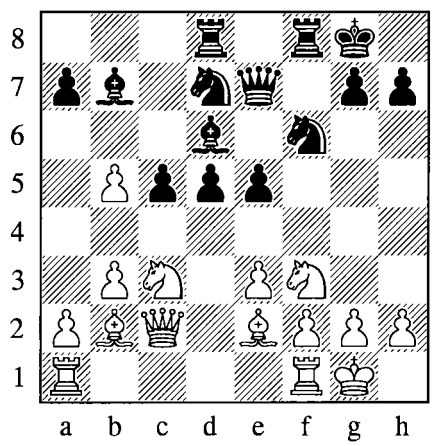
It is worth considering 9.e4.

9...♗b7 10.b3 ♘bd7 11.♗b2 ♕e7 12.0–0 ♖ad8

Full mobilization of the forces. The entire Black army has formed up behind the three-pawn central phalanx, which is ready for a ramming assault on the enemy. All this has been procured at the price of just one pawn.

Nevertheless, however fearsome the threat hanging over White's position may be, he intends to meet it fully armed. Tarrasch devises an orderly plan to defend his king's "fortress".

13.♕c2 e5



The offensive has started. The threat is ...e4, with a subsequent attack against h2. To defend that point – as he must – White needs to bring his king's knight via d2 to f1. So the rook must be moved away ... but where to? The only place is e1, seeing that the d1-square on the half-open file will have to be occupied by the *other* knight in order to protect f2 – which will have been dangerously weakened by the departure of the king's rook. White's next defensive actions, then, will consist of ♖fe1, ♘d1 and the manoeuvre ♘f3-d2-f1.

Nevertheless there will remain a vulnerable spot in White's defence – the point g2. This is just where Black will eventually aim his blow, but the effect of that blow will still depend on the breakthrough carried out by the pawn centre.

14.♖fe1 e4 15.♘d2 ♘e5

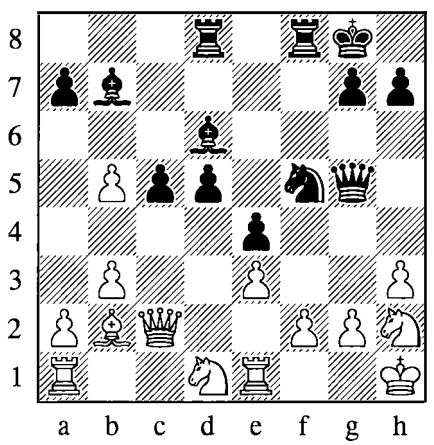
Black threatens direct attacks against f2 and h2 after either of his knights arrives at g4.

16.♘d1 ♘fg4 17.♗xg4 ♘xg4 18.♘f1 ♕g5

White has succeeded in defending f2 and h2 solidly, but Black starts preparing an attack against g2. His plan involves the knight manoeuvre ...♘h6-f5-h4. Other threats are also mounting, such as ...♖f3!. In a word, the knight on g4 is difficult to tolerate; White is obliged to play a move that weakens his position.

19.h3 ♘h6 20.♔h1 ♘f5 21.♘h2

Ensuring that g2 will also be defended (21...♘h4 22.♖g1).

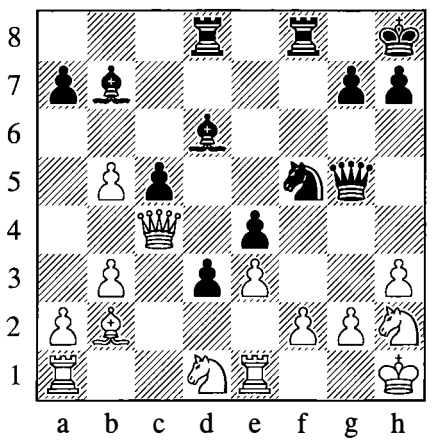


21...d4!

Now, however, the centre is set in motion, after which White's defence collapses. The underlying theme of this offensive is the weakening of the g3 point. On 22.exd4 Black plays 22...e3, and the lethal penetration of his pieces to g3 cannot be averted.

22.♗c1 d3 23.♕c4† ♔h8 24.♗b2

Already there is no satisfactory defence. With this move White at least forestalls a dual attack by the queen from e5, which was threatened in some variations. For instance if 24.♗d2, Black has 24...♘g3† 25.♔g1 (25.fxg3 ♕xg3 26.♘g4 ♕xe1†! and mate next move) 25...♘e2† 26.♔h1 ♕e5.



24...♘g3† 25.♔g1 ♗d5

Black isn't content to win the exchange with 25...d2.

26.♕a4 ♘e2† 27.♔h1 ♖f7 28.♕a6 h5 29.b6 ♘g3† 30.♔g1 axb6 31.♕xb6 d2

Look where the mobile parts of a pawn centre can sometimes get to! Black now wins the exchange while sustaining his mating attack.

32.♖f1 ♘xf1 33.♘xf1 ♗e6 34.♔h1 ♗xh3

All this is the consequence of the mighty role played by the pawn centre. The e- and d-pawns are still disorganizing White's defence.

35.gxh3 ♖f3 36.♘g3 h4 37.♗f6

An opportunity to lose "prettily".

37...♕xf6 38.♘xe4 ♖xh3†
0–1

The black pawn on d2 serves as a silent reproach to White for deciding to accept the sacrifice in the opening.

In some contemporary opening systems, for example the King's Indian Defence, attempts are made to prove that a formation of pawns in the centre is not so dangerous as long as it is fixed in place; danger only threatens from a *mobile* pawn centre. The adherents of this view obviously consider that a static centre can always be opposed by flank operations and harassed from the side. The point is, though, that in battles on the flank, the player controlling the centre is the one who mainly has the chances.

The danger of neglecting an immobile centre is well illustrated by the following game.

S. Zhukhovitsky – M. Taimanov

King's Indian Defence
25th USSR Championship semi-final
Leningrad 1957

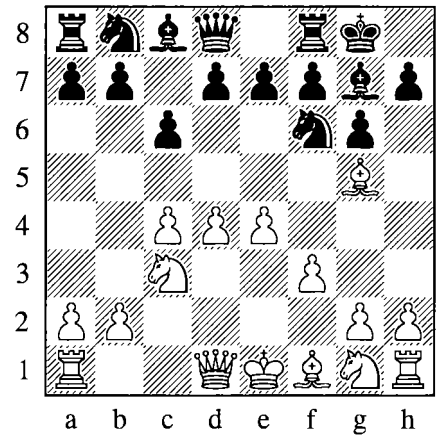
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7

In the Grünfeld Defence (3...d5), White's pawn centre is itself to some extent an object of attack; in this variation of the King's Indian, by contrast, the centre is sturdy and secure, but lacking in dynamism.

4.e4 0–0 5.f3 c6 6.♗g5

White has a three-pawn array in the centre, and shaking this formidable wall by an advance of the opposing centre pawns is impossible. Consequently, White is guaranteed mastery of the centre for a fairly lengthy period. Black's good development of his kingside pieces is

regarded as offering some compensation. His plan is going to consist of removing at least one pawn – that on c4 – from White's central group. The pawns on e4 and d4, however, remain in their commanding positions, and this shortly enables White to undertake a kingside attack.



6...a6

Aiming for ...b5. This eccentric and scarcely effective plan was also tried in the 1958 Botvinnik – Smyslov World Championship match. Smyslov had no success with it, which is understandable – such a plan is in contradiction to the classical principle of developing the pieces quickly and purposefully.

Black ought to follow the well-tried paths and endeavour to prepare ...e5 by means of ...d6, ...♕c7 and ...♘bd7.

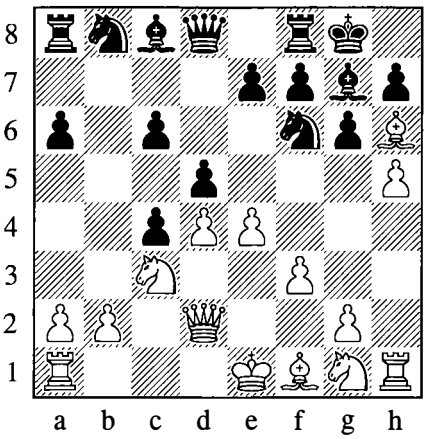
7.♕d2 b5 8.h4

The aggressive march of the rook's pawn is already familiar to us. It ensures the opening of the h-file.

8...bxc4 9.♗h6

This exchange too is typical, weakening the approaches to the black king's position. However it involves a pawn sacrifice, and the natural 9.♗xc4 (or 9.e5 and then ♗xc4) should be preferred.

9...d5 10.h5



An interesting development of the attack, involving some attractive mating variations.

If now 10...♘xh5, then 11.♖xh5 gxh5 12.♕g5, and mate is already unavoidable.

After 10...gxh5 11.♕g5 ♘e8 12.♕xh5 the only defence that is in some measure tolerable lies in 12...♕d6, with a view to 13.♗xg7? ♕g3† and 14...♕xg7. Instead the correct reply is 13.♗g5, when White's attack remains dangerous.

10...♗e6 11.e5

Not a bad alternative was 11.♗xg7 ♔xg7 12.hxg6 fxg6 13.♕h6†, with e4-e5 to follow.

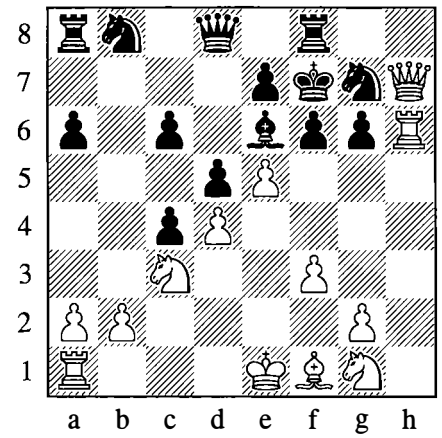
11...♘e8 12.♗xg7 ♘xg7 13.hxg6 hxg6

Instead 13...h5 promised more in the way of defensive resources, though Black's position would still be dismal after 14.♕h6 fxg6 15.♘h3! ♗xh3 16.♖xh3.

14.♕h6 f6

Of course 14...♘h5 would be met by 15.g4, but now White regains the sacrificed pawn while maintaining the attack.

15.♕h7† ♔f7 16.♖h6



16...♖g8

Here 16...♗f5 is no good in view of 17.g4; after the move in the game, however, Black loses not one pawn but two.

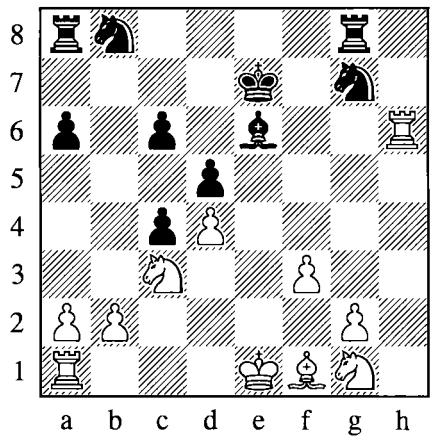
Not that he had any choice. It is true that with 16...♕e8 he could maintain material equality, but he would come under an irresistible attack: 17.♗e2! (threatening 18.♕xg6† ♔g8 19.♕h7† ♔f7 20.f4 and wins) 17...g5 (or 17...♗f5 18.g4) 18.f4 g4 19.♗xg4 ♗xg4 20.♕g6† ♔g8 21.♕xg4 f5 22.♕h4 and the threat of e5-e6 is decisive, as 22...e6 allows mate in two.

17.exf6 exf6 18.♕xg6† ♔f8 19.♕xf6†

A sober decision. Playing for the attack at all costs would be risky. On 19.0–0–0, Black would obtain counterattacking chances with 19...♘d7, threatening ...♗f5 or ...♘f5.

19...♕xf6 20.♖xf6† ♔e7 21.♖h6

White has gained a pawn; in addition, a phalanx consisting of two connected white passed pawns has been formed on the kingside. In an endgame, such an advantage is quite easy to convert into a win, but the endgame is still a long way off. A fairly sharp middlegame is in prospect, with neither king able to feel safely sheltered. This gives Black distinct counter-chances; he just needs to complicate the play and avoid exchanges that would bring the endgame closer.



Why is it that White's strong attack, into which he put a great deal of thought, brought such modest fruits? This happened because, relying on his pawn centre, he threw himself into the flank attack too quickly, leaving his king in the middle – which was impulsive and premature. That is why White's 9th move deserves blame.

The game continued:

21...♘f5 22.♖h7† ♔d6 23.♘ge2 ♘d7

Black mobilizes his reserves, utilizing the fact that White can't castle on account of 24...♘e3, winning the g2-pawn.

24.♔f2?

White could have preserved his advantage by playing 24.g4 at once.

24...c5?!

If Black hadn't made this mistake he would not only have been able to defend successfully; he would also have had some interesting possibilities of counterattack.

He ought to have played 24...♘f6 25.♖h1 ♖af8!, preventing an unpleasant g2-g4 and securing the position of his knight on f5 which exerts strong pressure on the centre and the kingside.

Should White answer with 26.g4?, there

follows 26...♘xg4†! 27.fxg4 ♘xd4†, and White has to part with his rook on a1, given that 28.♔g1 fails to 28...♖xg4† 29.♗g2 (29.♔h2 ♘f3† and mates) 29...♘f3† 30.♔f1 ♘h4†.

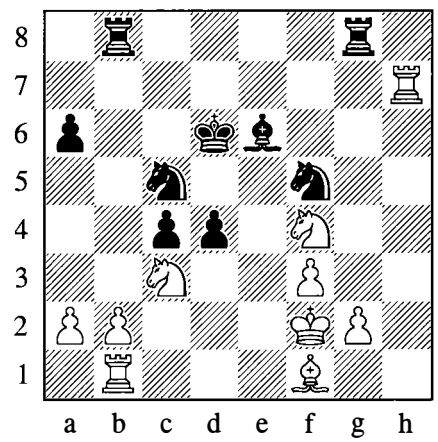
If White continues more modestly with 26.g3 (the bishop just has to be brought into play!), Black obtains a formidable attack by means of 26...♘e4† 27.fxe4? ♘xg3†.

25.dxc5† ♘xc5 26.♘f4

White is rid of his weak d4-pawn and has brought all his inactive pieces into the game; all this is the result of Black's thoughtless "attack" on the centre.

26...♖ab8 27.♖b1 d4?

The final error; after 27...♖ge8 it still wouldn't be simple for White to exploit his extra pawn.



28.♘xe6! dxc3 29.♘xc5 ♖xb2†

With 29...♔xc5 Black could save his piece, but not the game; there would follow 30.♖c7† ♔d6 31.♖xc4 ♖xb2† 32.♖xb2 cxb2 33.♖b4, with an easy win in the ending.

30.♖xb2 cxb2 31.♘e4† ♔e5 32.♖b7 c3 33.♘xc3 ♖c8 34.♘a4 ♖c2† 35.♗e2 b1=♕ 36.♖xb1 ♖xa2 37.♘c3 ♖c2 38.♖b3 a5 39.♖a3 a4 40.♘xa4 ♘d4 41.♖e3†

White has passed the time control without blundering anything away; Black therefore resigned.

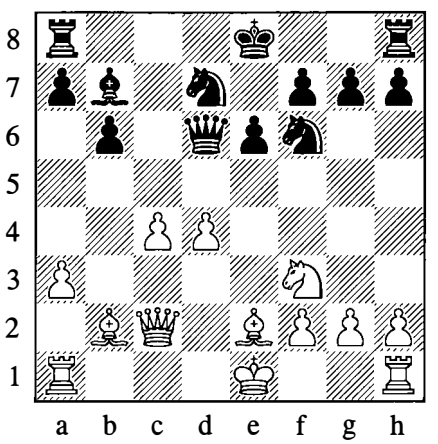
1–0

We have referred before to a pawn phalanx. This is the term applied to a group (usually a pair) of pawns, at least one of which is located on a half-open file. The phalanx is a dynamic concept, associated with forward movement. A pawn couple of this type potentially has the dynamic power to breach the enemy's front line. A central phalanx with pawns on the d- and c-files is a highly effective weapon. In practice, the most frequently encountered phalanx is formed by the e- and f-pawns; we shall give detailed attention to it in the next chapter. Here we will consider the special type of phalanx that consists of "hanging" pawns, that is, pawns located on two half-open files and detached from the rest of the pawn chain. The hanging phalanx is usually situated on the d- and c-files – it generally arises from certain specific systems and variations. Let us look at some examples.

G. Levenfish – M. Botvinnik

Nimzo-Indian Defence
Moscow/Leningrad (3) 1937

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 d5 5.cxd5 ♕xd5 6.e3 c5 7.a3 ♗xc3† 8.bxc3 b6 9.♘f3 ♘bd7 10.c4 ♕d6 11.♗b2 ♗b7 12.♗e2 cxd4 13.exd4



White has acquired hanging pawns on d4 and c4. This pawn group is isolated from the rest of his pawns; in addition it is placed on a pair of half-open files, which means that if it is blocked it will prove to be an object of attack for the opponent's major pieces. Both these circumstances characterize the weak aspects of the hanging pawn centre. But this centre also has a great merit – mobility. The hanging pawn centre is first and foremost a phalanx, and if it has an opportunity to display its dynamic qualities and advance, it may sweep everything from its path.

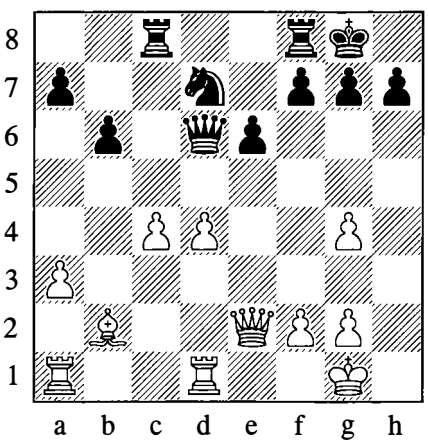
Let us see how the struggle developed further:

13...0–0 14.0–0 ♘g4 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.hxg4 ♗xe2 17.♕xe2 ♖ac8

The vulnerable point in White's hanging centre is the c4-pawn, and this is where Black aims his blows.

18.♖fd1

White is preparing a bold advance of his centre pawn, to which Black responds by continuing to concentrate his pressure on the c-file.



18...♖c7

If Black wanted, he could have hindered his opponent's plan by playing 18...♖fe8, and if 19.♕f1 then 19...♕f4; but he reckons, not without justification, that the d4-d5 advance is double-edged. The d-pawn has nowhere to go beyond d5, while Black will take control of the c5-square and nail down the c4-pawn. Such a pawn that is deprived of mobility and has become backward is a serious positional weakness.

19.d5 e5 20.♖e1 f6 21.a4 h6

Black stops g4-g5.

If 21...♖fc8, then after 22.♗a3 ♘c5 the thrust 23.g5 is not without benefit to White.

22.a5 bxa5 23.♗a3 ♘c5 24.♖eb1 a6 25.♕e1 ♖fc8 26.♕xa5 ♕d7 27.♖b6

Aiming to bring about a further advance of the d-pawn, which would occur immediately in answer to 27...♕xg4.

27...♘d3?

This leads to defeat.

After 27...♘e4 Black should not lose, as numerous analyses of this position have shown.

28.d6

Owing to the threat of ♕d5† Black loses the exchange.

28...♘f4 29.dxc7

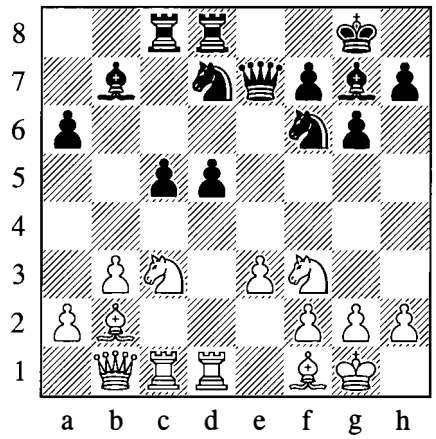
And White went on to win.

...1–0

Similarly in this next example, the player facing the hanging centre failed to turn it into an object of attack; on the contrary, its dynamic potential quite quickly made itself felt.

A. Sokolsky – M. Botvinnik

11th USSR Championship semi-final, Leningrad 1938



17.♘e2 ♗h6

Threatening ...d4.

18.♗a3 ♘g4

Now the threat is ...♘xe3.

19.♕d3 ♘de5 20.♘xe5 ♕xe5 21.♘g3 ♕f6 22.♘h1 d4 23.♕e2 ♘e5 24.exd4 cxd4 25.♖xc8 ♗xc8

This is better than 25...♖xc8. The rook must be kept on the d-file to support the advance of the passed pawn. At the same time, ...♗g4 is threatened.

26.♖e1 d3

The hanging pawn has forced its way through.

27.♕d1 ♗g4 28.♕a1 d2 29.♖xe5 d1=♕

29...♕xe5 was also playable.

30.♖e8† ♖xe8 31.♕xf6 ♗e2 32.♘g3 ♗g7 33.♕c6 ♗b5

And Black soon won. The march of the d-pawn – one of the pair that constituted the hanging pawn centre – had proved decisive.

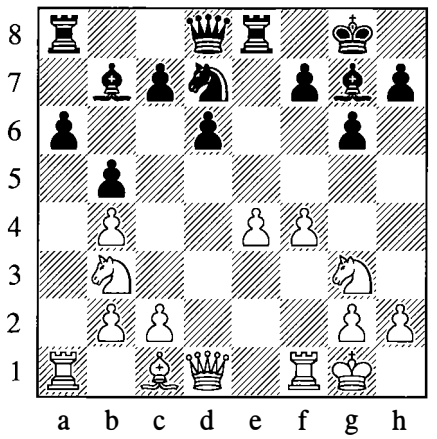
...0–1

On the subject of the pawn centre's role, we have already said that in some particular positions the centre may prove to be a weakness, not a strength – not a weapon, but an object of attack.

The weakness of a pawn in the centre is a serious positional defect, especially when it is exposed to attack along an open file and rank. Let us look at some examples that enable us to understand what positional processes go with the weakening of a centre pawn.

S. Tarrasch – M. Chigorin

St Petersburg (19) 1893



White's pawn on e4 has come under attack. Black made this attack the aim of his strategy for the following reasons: the e4-pawn lacks the support of other pawns; defending it with pieces has also become difficult, as the white king's bishop has been exchanged and the queen's rook is not so simple to mobilize; finally, the centre pawn is a convenient target for attack along the open lines in Black's possession – the e-file and the a8-h1 diagonal. It was in the opening stage that White played f2-f4, without foreseeing the long-term consequences of this advance.

The play now developed as follows:

17.♖e1 ♘f6 18.♘d2

Already White has to defend his unfortunate pawn in such an awkward manner, shutting in his own bishop.

Black would meet 18.♕d3 with 18...♕e7 19.♘d2 d5! 20.e5 ♕xb4.

And 18.♕f3 is also bad: apart from 18...♕e7, Black could capture immediately with 18...♘xe4 19.♘xe4 (or 19.♖xe4 ♖xe4 20.♘xe4 ♕e7 21.♘bd2 ♖e8 22.♘f6† ♗xf6 23.♕xb7 ♕e3†) 19...d5.

18...♕d7 19.h3 ♖e7 20.♖e2 ♖ae8 21.♕f1

21.♕e1 would not have saved the pawn, in view of 21...♕c6 22.c3 ♘xe4 23.♘dxe4 f5.

21...h5 22.h4 ♕g4 23.♕f2 ♕xh4

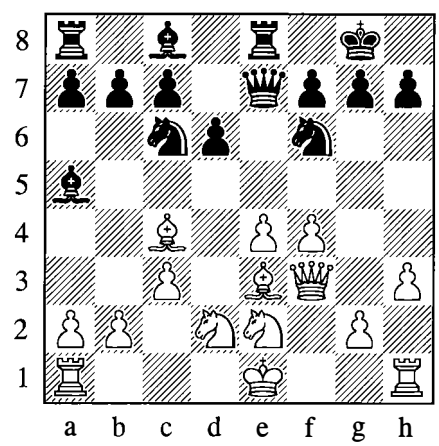
And Black went on to win.

...0–1

A similar scheme for attacking the centre pawn was implemented almost in the very opening of the following game.

G. Ravinsky – P. Romanovsky

Leningrad 1926



Here again the weakness of the white e-pawn, deprived of support from other pawns, results from the f2-f4 advance – which was carried out as early as the fourth move: 1.e4 ♘c6 2.d4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘xe5 4.f4

In the diagram position White's troubles are increased by the fact that he cannot bring his rooks to the defence of the weak pawn. True, he possesses a light-squared bishop, which Tarrasch lacked, and the black queen's bishop is not reinforcing the attack on the centre from b7; nonetheless this bishop finds another possibility for joining in the assault against e4.

Black is actually threatening to capture the pawn already. White therefore played:

12.♗d3

To which the reply was:

12...♗f5!.

Here is the possibility we mentioned. Black attacks the e4-pawn a fourth time.

13.♘g3

The continuation 13.exf5 ♕xe3 14.0–0–0 ♕xf3 15.♘xf3 ♘d5 would be miserable for White, as the point e3 would be dangerously weakened.

13...♗xe4! 14.♘gxe4?

White should have continued: 14.♘dxe4 ♘xe4 15.♕xe4 ♕xe4 (or 15...♕h4 16.♕xh7†) 16.♗xe4 d5 17.0–0–0 dxe4 18.♖he1 and the weakness of the e4-pawn allows White to claim equality.

14...♘xe4 15.♗xe4 d5

White has avoided material losses, but the fall of his centre pawn has allowed his opponent to launch a strong attack on the king, which has still not managed to castle.

16.♗xd5 ♕xe3† 17.♕xe3 ♖xe3† 18.♔d1 ♖d8 19.♗xc6 ♖ed3!

And the black rooks broke through to the

second rank, after which White was unable to resist for long.

...0–1

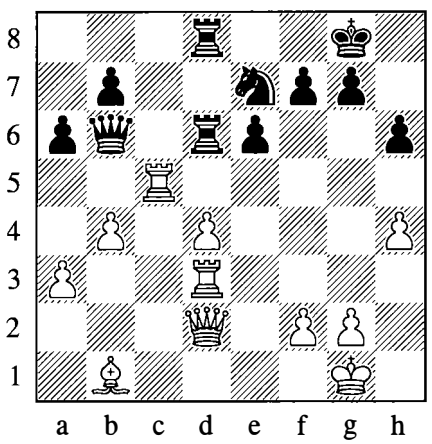
The obvious conclusion is that if a centre pawn (or any other pawn) cannot be protected by other pawns on the adjacent files, this can be a major source of the pawn's weakness. It goes without saying that we are referring to a *genuine* weakness, in other words a case where the pawn is under threat of attack from the opponent.

This is why an isolated centre pawn, if situated on an open file, can prove to be a dangerous weakness in the position.

The "isolated pawn" theme received elucidation in the positional teaching of Steinitz and was encountered frequently in tournament practice during the last decade of the nineteenth century – the period when this teaching took shape and underwent its baptism of fire. In the following game the struggle around an isolated pawn took an interesting course.

J. Showalter – J. Blackburne

Nuremberg 1896



The isolated pawn on d4 is a source of serious worry for White. Black has the prospect of increasing the attack with ...♘f5. The need to defend the pawn restricts the actions of White's pieces. He therefore perceives, correctly, that his chances lie in attacking his opponent's kingside, which has been weakened by the withdrawal of all the black pieces and by the move ...h6.

However, the obvious-looking 31.♖g3 (threatening ♕xh6) is no good, as Black can simply unpin his g-pawn with 31...♔f8, when the rook is forced to return to d3.

31.♕f4!

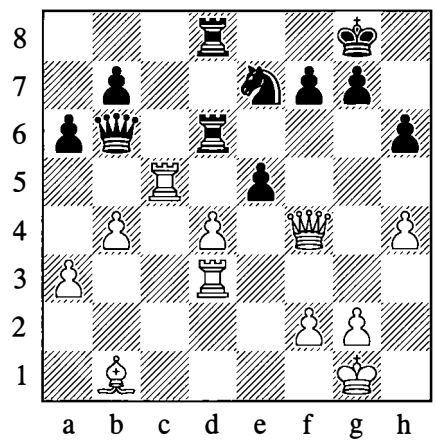
White is preparing 32.♖f3; and if 32...f6, *now* 33.♖g3.

In addition he is parrying the threat of 31...♘f5, which would be met by 32.d5!.

Showalter's move is well thought out, but we shall see that he has not calculated the ensuing variations to the end.

31...e5

An amusing but not dangerous attempt to "cut the Gordian knot", which evidently takes Showalter unawares.



32.♕xe5?

Truly a sad error. White keeps his pawn but loses a piece.

Instead 32.♕e4 would have enabled him to reach a draw. For example, 32...exd4 (What better move is there?) 33.♕xe7 ♖e6 34.♕c7 ♖e1† 35.♔h2 ♕xc7† 36.♖xc7 ♖xb1 37.♖xb7 a5 38.♖f3! f6 39.♖g3 g5 40.hxg5 hxg5 41.♖h3 d3 42.♖hh7 and draws.

32...♖e6 33.♕c7 ♖e1† 34.♔h2 ♕xc7† 35.♖xc7 ♘d5

And Black won.

...0–1

In conclusion let us examine, in full, some games which will help us towards a deeper understanding of the methods of planning when the objects targeted by the plan are weaknesses in the centre.

C. von Bardeleben – M. Chigorin

Queen's Pawn Opening
Hastings 1895

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♗g4 3.e3 e6 4.♗e2 ♘d7 5.b3

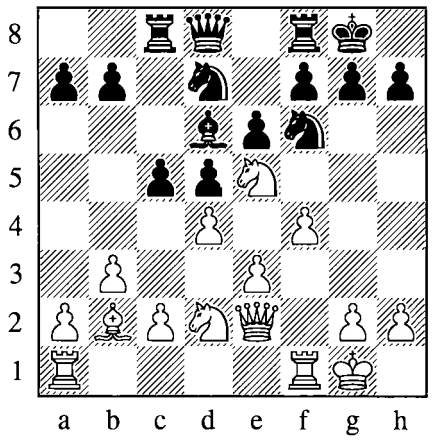
The opening proceeds placidly. Both opponents are occupied with mobilizing their forces, concentrating their efforts on the centre. This kind of "quiet" situation always results when there is no tension between the centre pawns. In the Queen's Pawn Opening, such tension usually depends on the moves c2-c4 and ...c7-c5.

5...♘gf6 6.♗b2 ♗d6 7.♘bd2 c6 8.♘e5

Seizing the e5-square would be more effective with the black queen's bishop on c8. In the present circumstances, it is hard to link this sortie to any concrete plan. Moreover the knight's position on e5 has only a superficial look of stability. In view of Black's counterplay based on ...c5, White's 8.♘e5 amounts to firing a blank.

It would be useful to finish his development (8.0–0) and then try to intensify the play in the centre with c2-c4. In that case White could count on roughly holding the balance. Given his unincisive opening play, he cannot expect more.

8...♗xe2 9.♕xe2 0–0 10.f4 ♖c8 11.0–0 c5



12.♖ac1

White already has to defend; Black was threatening to win a pawn with 12...cxd4.

12...cxd4 13.exd4 ♕a5! 14.♘d3

Defending the a2-pawn indirectly.

Another possible reply was 14.a4, and if 14...♗b4 then 15.♘b1. White's plan would consist of neutralizing Black's pressure on the c-file by means of c2-c3, and then trying to go into action on the kingside.

14...♗a3!

By exchanging bishops, Black achieves a weakening of the c3-square and the pawn on d4. He now hopes to seize the initiative.

15.♗xa3 ♕xa3

Black can't take the pawn on a2, but by combining pressure on the c-file with the manoeuvre ...♕d6-b6 to attack the d4-pawn, he threatens to gain an advantage.

16.c4

Forced; after Black's ...♕d6 this move would no longer be possible, and the c-pawn would prove a real weakness.

16...b6

Naturally 16...♕d6 would be met by 17.c5.

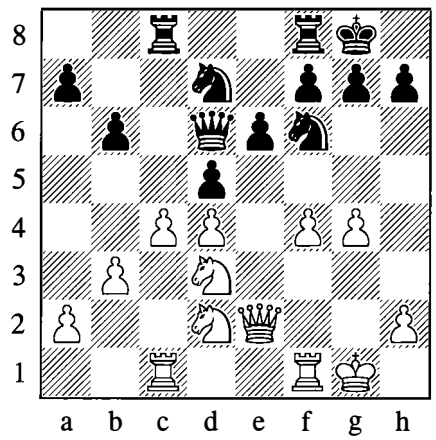
17.g4

After this sharp but weakening move, White will have to play accurately to avoid being much worse.

The more solid 17.♖c2 ♕d6 18.♘f3 keeps the game approximately level.

17...♕d6

Now the threat is ...dxc4 followed by ...♕xd4†.



18.♘e5

It was essential to play the consistent 18.g5! dxc4 19.bxc4 ♕xd4† 20.♘f2.

Now in the event of 20...♘e8? 21.♘de4 Black has no adequate defence against 22.♖fd1.

Black must instead give up a knight for three pawns by 20...♕xf4 21.gxf6 ♕xf6, with a double-edged position.

18...dxc4 19.♖xc4 b5! 20.♖xc8 ♕xd4† 21.♔h1 ♖xc8

The first stage of Black's plan consisted of creating weaknesses in the White position, particularly the weak pawn on d4. The second stage was the victorious attack on that pawn. The third stage – exploitation of the advantage – now begins.

22.♘df3 ♕xf4 23.♘xd7 ♘xd7 24.♕xb5 ♘f6 25.♘g5 ♕c7 26.♘xf7

An unsound sacrifice, but the situation was hopeless.

26...♕xf7 27.♕e5

He can't regain the piece with 27.g5, on account of 27...♕d7.

27...♕d7 28.♖e1 ♕d5† 29.♕xd5 exd5 30.♖e7 ♖c1†
0–1

F. Dus-Chotimirsky – P. Romanovsky

Queen's Gambit
4th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1925

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.g3 ♘c6 7.♗g2 ♗e7

Through a slight transposition of moves, a position in one of the main lines of the Tarrasch Defence has come about. White has opted for the plan devised by the famous Polish Grandmaster Rubinstein, which is based on a persistent attack against the d5-pawn.

It must be said that Rubinstein's plan has brought a good deal of grief to the supporters of Tarrasch's idea.

8.0–0 0–0 9.dxc5

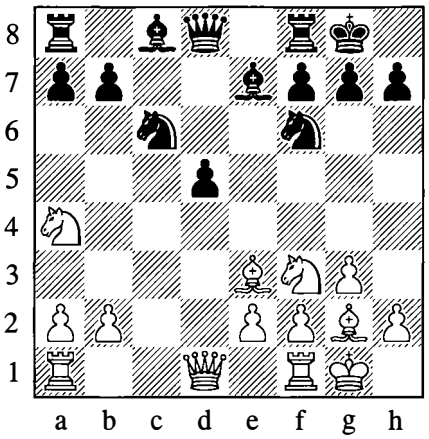
This exchange, in conjunction with the next two moves, is the point of departure for a scheme that White had successfully employed in Reti – Tarrasch, Pistyan 1922, although in that game instead of castling Tarrasch had played the less flexible ...♗e6.

9...♗xc5 10.♘a4 ♗e7

The only good square; otherwise 11.♗g5.

11.♗e3

White is going to occupy the key point d4. As a result, the isolated d5-pawn, fixed in place, can become the object of a dangerous attack – as has happened in many a game in this variation.



11...♗f5

At this point Black has also tried 11...b6, 11...♘e4 and 11...♖e8. But all these continuations have failed to solve the difficult problem Black has with his d5-pawn.

With the move in the game, Black intends to bring about an exchange of light-squared bishops after ...♗e4, wrongly supposing that the d-pawn will be strengthened by this. True, one of the white pieces attacking this pawn will disappear from the board, but then a black piece that could defend it will disappear at the same time. What is of decisive significance, however, is not the weakness of the d5-pawn itself but possession of the strategic square d4. To fight for this square was Black's chief task.

Comparatively speaking, the best options are 11...♘e4 and 11...♖e8.

12.♖c1 ♗e4 13.♘d4

Simplest and most logical. The blockade of the d5-pawn is secured.

13...♘xd4

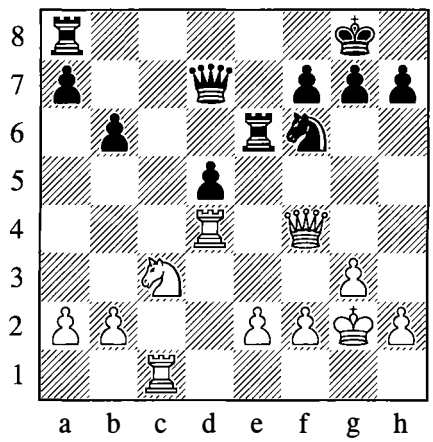
On 13...♘e5 there would follow 14.f3 ♗g6 15.♗f4 ♘c4 16.b3 ♘d6 17.♗h3 ♘h5 18.♗e3, and Black's position remains difficult.

Black's best chance is 13...♗xg2 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.♔xg2 ♕d7 16.♗c5 ♖fe8. It is easier to defend a pawn on c6 than one on d5, and White's weakened king position promises Black some counterplay.

14.♕xd4 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 b6

Essential to free the rook from defending the a7-pawn.

16.♖fd1 ♕d7 17.♘c3 ♗c5 18.♕f4 ♗xe3 19.♕xe3 ♖fe8 20.♕f4 ♖e6 21.♖d4!



The pawn on d5 is doomed. The entire white army now throws itself into the attack on Black's isolated vanguard.

21...♖ae8 22.♖cd1 ♖e5

On 22...♖d6, White plays 23.e4.

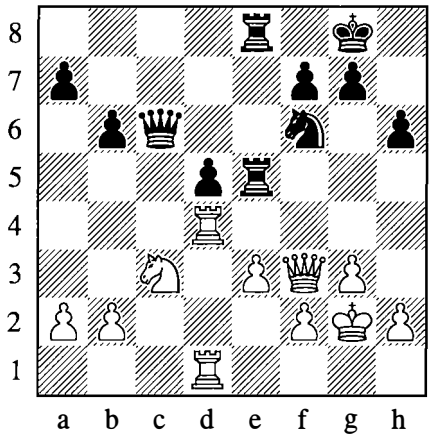
23.♕f3

With 23.e4 White could immediately win the d5-pawn, easily deciding the game. If 23...♖h5 in reply, then 24.h4.

23...h6 24.e3 ♕c6

Black is powerless to defend the pawn. For instance: 24...♖h5 25.h4 ♖ee5 26.e4! dxe4

(26...♘xe4 27.♖xe4! dxe4 28.♕xh5!) 27.♘xe4 ♕c6 28.♘xf6† ♕xf6 29.♕xf6 gxf6 30.g4 ♖xh4 31.♔g3 and White wins the rook.



25.♘xd5 ♘e4

Looking for any random opportunities.

Of course, with 25...♘xd5 26.♖xd5 ♖xd5 27.♖xd5 Black could drag out his resistance, but his hopes of success would be highly problematic.

26.♘c3 f5

The continuation 26...♖f5 27.♕xf5 ♘xc3† 28.♕f3 ♕xf3† 29.♔xf3 ♘xd1 30.♖xd1 ♖c8 31.♖d2 shouldn't save Black either, although it wouldn't allow White to triumph so quickly.

27.♖d7 ♖5e7 28.♖xe7 ♖xe7 29.♖d8† ♖e8 30.♘d5!

With a number of threats; White wins at least another pawn.

30...♔f7

Or 30...♔h8 31.♘e7 ♕b5 32.♕xf5 ♕xf5 33.♖xe8†, and White comes out a rook up.

31.♕xf5† ♘f6 32.♖xe8 ♔xe8 33.♕e5† ♔f8 34.e4 ♘d7 35.♕e7† ♔g8 36.h4 ♘c5 37.♕xa7
1–0

A valuable game, in which three stages of a unified plan find clear expression. The first stage (moves 9-12) fixes the objects of attack (the points d4 and d5). The second (moves 13-25) executes a concrete scheme aimed at winning the d5-pawn. In the third stage, the material and positional advantages are exploited. On Black's part, the manoeuvre ...♗c8-f5-e4 proved to be mistaken.

O. Duras – A. Rubinstein

Four Knights Game
Carlsbad 1907

Before we discuss this game I should like to say a few words about its epic story (if I may put it that way), and about the author of the epic himself – that classic strategic planner, Rubinstein.

The quiet opening, in which the first battles in the centre are slow to begin, brought advantage to neither side. White was the first to start an offensive with f2-f4, a scheme which had been tested several times in practice and had so far yielded good results. Already in the opening stage, Rubinstein devised a plan for attacking the e4-pawn, anticipating that f2-f4 would weaken it. The attack undertaken by White looked dangerous but required to be conducted energetically and purposefully. Duras failed to endow his play with a concrete design, to settle on a clearly defined goal and realistic ways of attaining it. The progress of his plan began to be interrupted by individual passive moves; the offensive took on a formless character, while Rubinstein was single-mindedly stepping up the pressure against the pawn on e4. This pressure soon turned into an energetic attack involving nearly all Black's pieces. The central bulwark of White's position – the e4-pawn – fell, and this brought the collapse of the kingside in its wake.

This game, played by Rubinstein at the dawn of his creative development, foreshadows

all of his many-sided activity in the field of the opening, the endgame, and above all the planning of the middlegame struggle.

Rubinstein's mastery captivates by its lucid form, its rigour, its rationality. With him everything is well measured, constructed stone by stone. He is the supreme designer of the chess struggle, which is why his plans create a monolithic impression and serve as fitting material for study. Rubinstein doesn't like relying on the power of intuition. In many ways he doesn't even trust his own experience – he is prepared to re-examine every small stone of his edifice painstakingly, as if encountering it for the first time.

The diligence with which Rubinstein conducts his games turns every plan that he successfully implements into a fine creative work of shining intelligence and convincing logic. Rubinstein is not a psychologist, or a philosopher, or an intrepid artist, but a profound connoisseur of the precise line, the accurate stroke, the lucid harmony of thought. In the present game, all these features of his creative persona come strikingly to the fore.

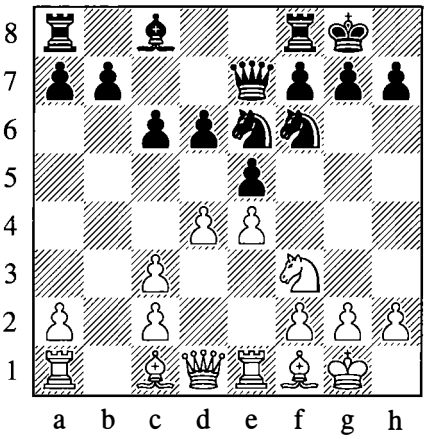
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗b4 5.0–0 0–0 6.d3 ♗xc3

Black exchanges the knight off so as not to allow ♘e2, a useful move for the kingside attack.

7.bxc3 d6 8.♗g5

An annoying pin, forcing Black to take measures to free himself from it before proceeding to draw up his game plan. Meanwhile White prepares his forces for an attack on the kingside; after arranging his pieces appropriately, he envisages launching the offensive with f2-f4.

8...♕e7 9.♖e1 ♘d8 10.d4 ♘e6 11.♗c1 c6 12.♗f1



In our day this position belongs to theory; it has arisen repeatedly in practice and has undergone thorough investigation. The majority opinion is that thanks to Black's good development and sound position in the centre, the game can be described as balanced. Yet when this game was played, the opening idea employed by Duras was relatively new and caused Black considerable anxiety – nine times out of ten White's attack had brought him success. Rubinstein was the first to disclose safe methods of defending the position, and also some deeply pondered ideas for Black to take the initiative himself and stage a counterattack.

12...♕c7

Four years later, in his game with Spielmann at the second Carlsbad tournament, Rubinstein continued 12...♖d8. There followed 13.g3 ♕c7 14.♘h4 d5! 15.f4, and now with 15...♘xe4 Black could have picked up a pawn without allowing his opponent any compensation.

In the present game, Rubinstein adheres to a different plan – less energetic, but more camouflaged – for an attack on the e4-pawn, and to this end he places his king's rook on e8.

13.♘h4 ♖e8 14.♕d3

A serious waste of time. White is evidently afraid of a counterattack with 14...d5, and

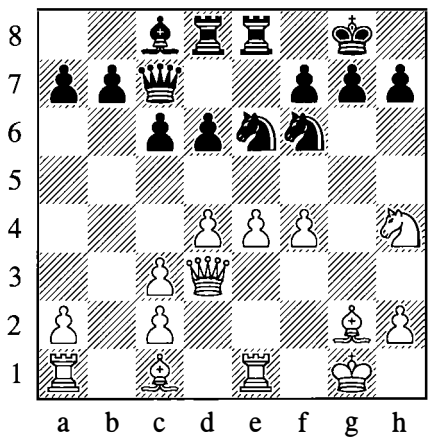
defends his c3-pawn in case of 15.exd5 ♘xd5. The fact is, however, that after 14.g3 d5 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♖xe5 ♘xc3 17.♕e1 ♘a4 18.♗f4 White would have a significant lead in development.

14...♗d7 15.g3 ♖ad8 16.♗g2 ♗c8

This bishop will later switch to b7, where it will join in the attack against the e4-pawn. In this way, move by move, cleverly and persistently, Black arranges his pieces for the counterattack in the centre.

17.f4 exf4 18.gxf4

White has a mobile pawn centre, which derives extra support from the f4-pawn. True, his queenside forces have yet to be mobilized and his king position is somewhat open. Nonetheless the strong central pawn group affords him good prospects for the future. He only has to base his plan on a concrete scheme, bearing in mind that the exceptional sharpness of the position demands a dynamic approach. All Black's pieces are trained on the centre squares, which is why it is imperative to conduct the attack swiftly and energetically.



18...♘f8!

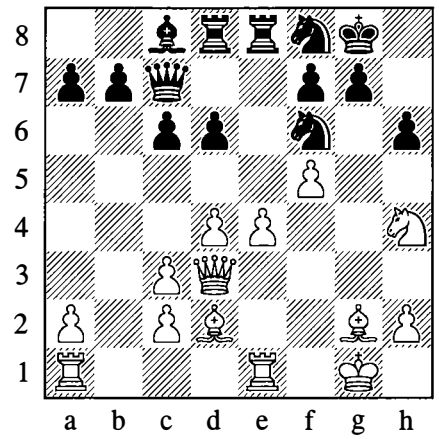
A cunning retreat. Black intends to play ...♘g6 and increase the pressure on the centre still further after removing the white knight.

19.f5

White would like to play 19.e5, but after 19...♘g6 20.♘xg6 hxg6 21.♗a3 ♗f5 22.♗xd6 ♕xd6 23.exd6 ♗xd3 24.cxd3 ♖xd6 Black has the better ending.

With the move in the game, White stops the knight from emerging to g6 and threatens to play ♗g5. The reply is forced.

19...h6 20.♗d2



White starts to play planlessly – and this in an extremely tense position, where every move has to strike home. He should be combining the threat of a breakthrough in the centre (e4-e5) with an attack in the g-file (♔h1, ♖g1 etc.). The execution of this plan would be served, in the first place, by 20.♗f4 with the threat of e4-e5. There would probably follow 20...♘h5 21.♗g3 ♘h7, when a tense struggle would be in prospect with chances for both sides.

20...♘8h7 21.♘f3

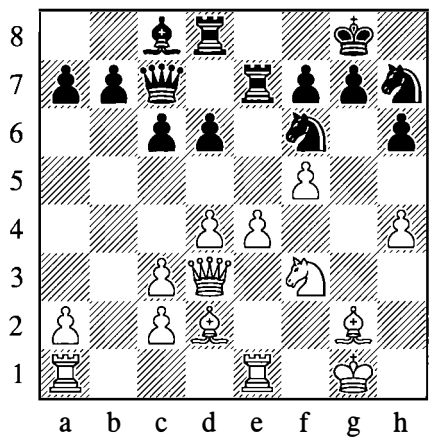
Once again White sets about solving a localized problem – keeping the black knight away from g5. It will not take much for his entire game to tumble downhill.

He should have played 21.♕g3, when the threat to take on h6 has to be parried by

21...♘h5, after which a position of dynamic equilibrium arises.

21...♖e7 22.h4?!

Even now, after 22.e5 dxe5 23.♖xe5 ♖xe5 24.♘xe5, White would have a satisfactory position in spite of his pawn weaknesses, thanks to the active placing of his pieces.



22...c5!

The gradually prepared counterattack begins, leading to a decisive result more rapidly than could have been supposed. Black's immediate threat is ...c4, winning a pawn.

23.♘h2?

If 23.dxc5? then 23...dxc5 24.♕c4 b5! 25.♕xb5 ♘xe4, when White's position quickly falls apart.

However, White had one last chance to make a fight of it; he could still have opted for 23.e5 with complex play.

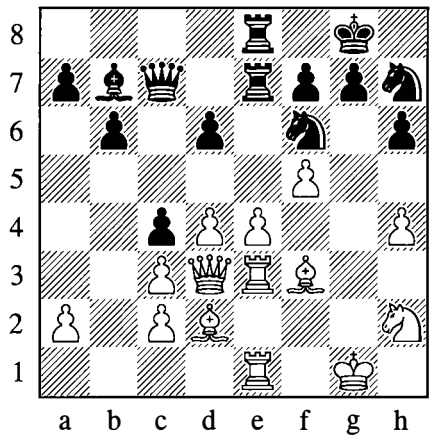
23...♖de8 24.♖e3

The only reply, but it merely postpones the fate of the centre pawn.

24...b6 25.♗f3 ♗b7 26.♖ae1

The loss of the pawn could be delayed by 26.d5, but the surrender of the e5-square would be even more harmful, and the pawn would be doomed to perish anyway. The continuation could be 26...♘d7 27.♗g2 ♘e5 28.♕f1 ♘f6 29.♔h1 ♕c8, followed by ...♗a6 with the conquest of new territory.

26...c4



27.♕e2 ♗xe4

Done it! The linchpin of the defence has fallen; within a few moves, everything will collapse.

28.♕g2 d5 29.♗c1 ♗xf3 30.♘xf3 ♖xe3 31.♗xe3 ♖e4 32.♕h3 ♖g4† 33.♔h1 ♖g3 34.♕h2 ♘g4 35.♗g1

Or 35.♕e2 ♖xf3.

35...♘xh2 36.♗xh2 ♕f4 37.♘g1 ♕xh4 0–1

M. Botvinnik – E. Zagoriansky

Reti Opening
Sverdlovsk 1943

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.b3 ♘f6 4.♗b2 ♗e7 5.e3 0–0 6.♘c3 c5

After this active advance, White has the possibility of playing to isolate the d5-pawn and then using that achievement as the basis

for a large-scale plan. Nonetheless it is hard to reproach Black for trying to liven up the play and opening the position in the centre, especially since other less active continuations would have their negative points.

Either 6...b6 7.♘e5 ♗b7 8.♗e2 ♘bd7 9.f4 or 6...♘bd7 7.♗e2 b6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘d4 would guarantee White the better prospects.

7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♘xd5 exd5

Capturing with 8...♕xd5 allows White to develop his bishop with tempo. After 9.♗c4, the queen has to go back to d8; 9...♕h5 would be worse in view of 10.g4!.

9.d4

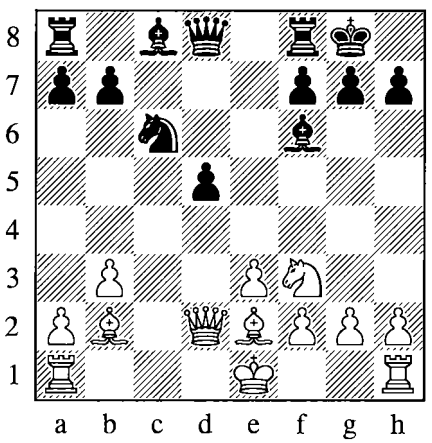
White's plan is clear. Its first stage consists in giving Black an isolated pawn on d5.

9...cxd4

If 9...♕a5†, then 10.♕d2 ♕xd2† 11.♔xd2.

On 9...♗f6, White does well with 10.♕d2 b6 11.♗e2. Sooner or later, after dxc5, Black will be left with hanging pawns, which under the present conditions will prove to be the weak point of his position. Black therefore exchanges on d4 of his own accord, consenting to the isolation of his d5-pawn. At least it won't pay White to recapture on d4 with either minor piece (on account of ...♗b4† or ...♕a5†).

10.♕xd4 ♗f6 11.♕d2 ♘c6 12.♗e2



12...♗e6

The start of a faulty plan. Black confines his activities to defending the d5-pawn, whereas it was essential to use any means possible to prevent White from seizing the d4-square. To this end it would even be worth playing ...d5-d4 at some point, giving the pawn up.

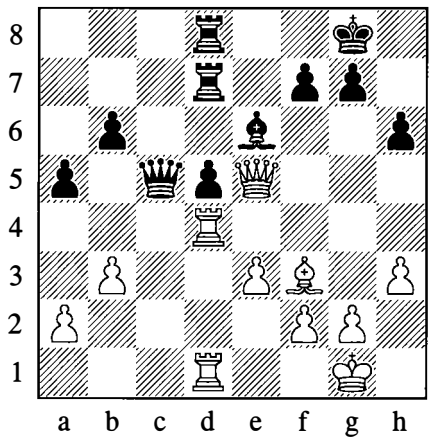
13.0–0 ♗xb2 14.♕xb2 ♕a5 15.♖fd1 ♖fd8 16.♖d2 ♖d7 17.♖ad1 ♖ad8 18.h3 h6 19.♘e5 ♘xe5 20.♕xe5 ♕c5 21.♗f3

The second part of White's plan amounted to tying all Black's forces to the defence of the weak centre pawn. This aim is achieved; the dénouement approaches.

21...b6 22.♕b2 ♖c8 23.♕e5 ♖cd8

He should simply have given up the pawn with 23...♕c7 or 23...♕c3.

24.♖d4 a5



25.g4

The final phase of the plan. Utilizing the fact that Black's pieces are elsewhere occupied with defending the centre, White undertakes a kingside offensive.

25...♕c6 26.g5 hxg5 27.♕xg5 f6 28.♕g6 ♗f7 29.♕g3

Threatening ♔h1 followed by ♖g1, after which the attack on the h- and g-files will be irresistible.

29...f5

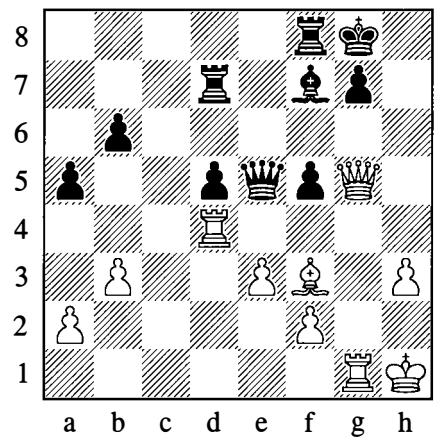
Played in order to connect the queen with the kingside, but now new weaknesses are formed on e5 and g5.

30.♕g5 ♕e6

After this move, Black's pieces are too passively placed. With 30...♖d6 (intending 31.♕xf5? ♖f6) he could still put up stubborn resistance.

31.♔h1 ♕e5 32.♖g1 ♖f8

Black's position is forlorn, but this move, which hems in his king, facilitates White's concluding attack.



33.♕h6! ♖b8 34.♖h4 ♔f8 35.♕h8† ♗g8 36.♖f4 ♖bb7 37.♖g5 ♖f7 38.♕h5 ♕a1† 39.♔h2 g6 40.♕xg6 ♗h7 41.♕d6† ♖be7 42.♕d8†

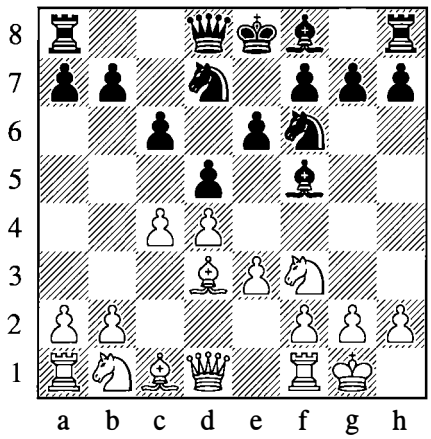
1–0

The weak d5-pawn, the source of all Black's woes in this game, has remained intact, but his king perishes.

H. Kmoch – A. Alekhine

Queen's Gambit
Kecskemet 1927

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c6 3.e3 ♗f5 4.♗d3 e6 5.0–0 ♘d7 6.c4 ♘gf6



7.♕c2?

White has been conducting the opening fairly planlessly, but by playing 7.♘c3 at this point he could count on a balanced position. Instead, at the cost of a tempo, he induces Black to... carry out an exchange that is favourable to himself, seeing that from the very first moves he has conceived a project to gain control of the light squares.

7...♗xd3 8.♕xd3 ♘e4

An interesting and original plan, especially if you consider that the knight cannot be maintained on this square. Black wants to exchange both knights and provoke his opponent into advancing with e3-e4, weakening his centre pawn. Not divining his opponent's plan, White willingly falls in with it...

9.♘d2 ♘df6 10.♘c3 ♘xd2 11.♗xd2 ♗e7 12.e4

This is what Black was counting on. Now he

acquires a target – the pawn on d4.

12...dxe4 13.♘xe4 0–0 14.♗c3

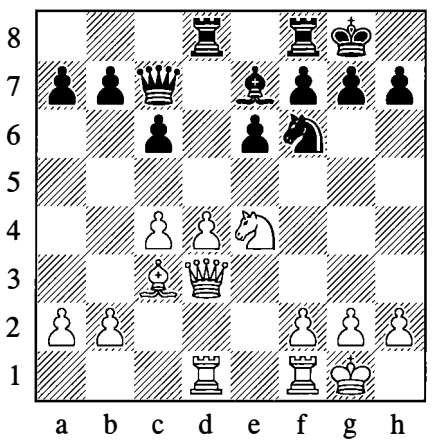
Not a bad position for the bishop, but if White's play had been inspired by a concrete plan, he would have had no trouble finding the best scheme for deploying his forces.

Considering that his pawn on d4 was likely to be left somewhat weak, he should have tried to imagine how Black would set about organizing pressure against this point. Black is obviously going to move his queen to c7 and then station one of his rooks on the half-open file. To forestall this, White needed to place his bishop not on c3 but on f4, and follow with ♖ad1 and ♗e5. A tense struggle would have ensued, with chances for both sides.

Instead of this, White ends up in the worse position within the space of a few moves. The neglect of a concrete design, that crucial element in planning, often does lead to such results.

14...♕c7 15.♖ad1 ♖ad8

Black has reached the set-up he envisaged.



16.♖d2?

White ignores his opponent's threats; he shouldn't let the queen in on the f4-square. A wholly adequate defence, securing the position of the d4-pawn, lay in 16.f4 as indicated by Alekhine. It would then be hard for Black to stop f4-f5, removing the blockading e6-pawn, after which the advance d4-d5 would only be a matter of time. For example 16...♖fe8 17.f5, and now 17...e5 18.♘xf6† ♗xf6 19.♕g3 is fine for White, as 19...♕b6 fails to 20.c5, with dxe5 to follow.

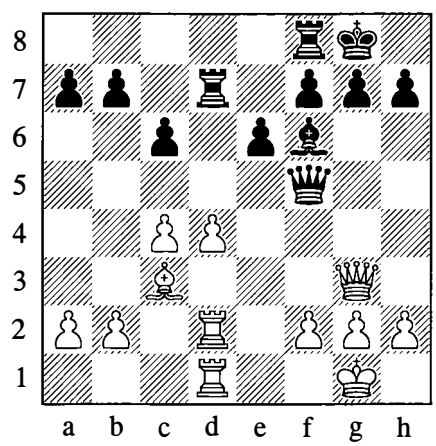
Another way for White to reach equality is: 16.d5 cxd5 17.♘xf6† gxf6 (Or 17...♗xf6 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♕f3 ♕xc4 20.♕xf6 ♕e4 21.♖fe1 ♕g6 22.♕d4 ♕g7 23.♖e5, when White's attack compensates for the pawn.) 18.♕f3 dxc4 Everything else is considerably worse. 19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.♕xf6 ♕a5 21.♖c1 and the result is either perpetual check by 21...♕b5 22.♖xc4 ♕xc4 23.♕g5†, or else a drawish rook ending after 21...♕f5 22.♕xf5 exf5 23.♖xc4.

16...♕f4 17.♘xf6†

On 17.♖e1, Black would probably have played the simple 17...♖d7.

17...♗xf6 18.♖fd1 ♖d7 19.♕g3 ♕f5

The d4-d5 advance is prevented, and the pawn on d4 becomes a constant worry for White.



20.f4

Another weak move, creating new objects of attack for Black. Thus, a threat of ...g5 will eventually arise. Indeed the pawn on f4 itself will also need defending. Finally we should note the weakening of the e4-square, which is accentuated by the queen's position on f5.

The best attempt at defence was to offer a queen exchange once again, by 20.♕d3. On 20...♕h5, White would play 21.♕e2 ♕xe2 22.♖xe2 ♖fd8 23.♖ed2 c5 24.d5 ♗xc3 25.bxc3 ♖d6 26.♔f1. The endgame is somewhat worse for White, but he could still have resisted for a long time.

20...♖fd8 21.♕e3

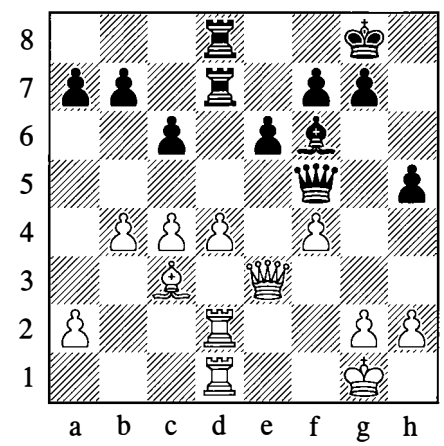
Black was threatening ...c5.

21...h5

A typical blockading move. Black dominates the light squares.

22.b4?

The final positional error in an awkward situation. It was essential to leave the pawn on b2, so that if necessary the c4-pawn could be supported by b2-b3. This was the only way White could maintain control of the key centre square d5.



22...b5!

A standard pawn thrust to seize the square d5.

So in this example we acquaint ourselves with one more important positional function of the pawn: to conquer squares in order to establish convenient outposts there for the pieces.

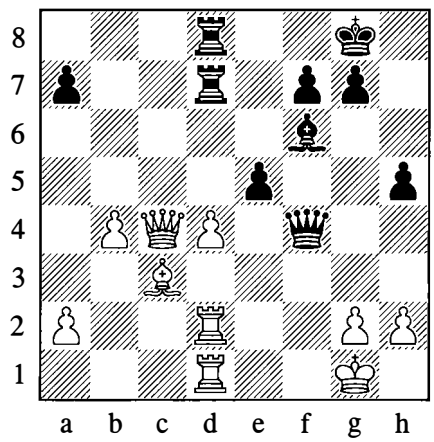
23.♕f3

If White is to perish, he will do so with honour!

After 23.c5 he would be suffocated and unable to defend his weak pawns on d4 and f4. Black would only need to place his rook on d5, play ...g6 and transfer his bishop to h6, after which one of the threats ...e5 or ...g5 would prove impossible to avert.

23...bxc4 24.♕xc6 ♕xf4 25.♕xc4 e5

A fifth attack opposite four defenders.



26.♕e2 exd4 27.♖d3

Trying to escape with his bishop to e1.

The retreat with 27.♗a1 or 27.♗b2 would be met by 27...d3!, whereas now White imagines that the d4-pawn is pinned.

27...dxc3! 28.♖xd7 ♖xd7 29.♖xd7

Or 29.♕e8† ♔h7 30.♕xd7 ♕e4! 31.♕h3 c2 32.♖f1 ♕d4† 33.♔h1 ♕d1, which similarly wins for Black.

29...♗d4† 30.♔h1 ♕c1†
0–1

In this game Kmoch made a few tactical mistakes, of which the most serious were moves 16 and 22. However, his chief error was a strategic one – the neglect of the light squares, after the exchange of light-squared bishops which he himself had brought about in the opening.

M. Euwe – A. Alekhine

Queen's Indian Defence
World Championship (23), Netherlands 1937

In this game with its wealth of content, an imaginative dispute on the theme of hanging pawns took place.

The minds of chess theorists and masters still have much work to do in order to clarify the contradictions of hanging pawns, even to a relative degree. The pawns are both a strength and a weakness, both a mechanism of attack and an object to *be* attacked; both a structure that fixes the player's gain of space in the centre, and an edifice with shaky foundations.

To the study of this problem, the present game is one of the most interesting contributions, supplied by the thinking of two World Champions.

In this case the hanging pawns already materialized in the opening stage.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 ♗e7 6.0–0 0–0 7.b3 d5 8.♘e5 c5 9.dxc5 bxc5 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♘c3 ♘bd7!

Black had foreseen this position when he started his energetic pawn attack on the centre at move 8. He now completes the mobilization of his forces while defending the d5-pawn indirectly.

12.♘d3 ♘b6

Seemingly defending the d5-pawn solidly, but presenting White with the opportunity to attack its neighbour, the c5-pawn.

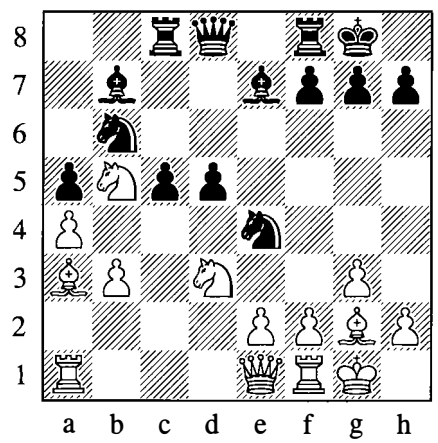
A safer defence of the hanging pawns could have been organized by means of: 12...♕a5 13.♗b2 (13.♗d2 ♕a6) 13...♖fd8 14.♘f4 ♘b6 15.♕e1 (threatening ♘xd5) 15...♔f8, and White cannot increase the attack.

13.a4 a5 14.♗a3 ♖c8 15.♘b5

Unexpectedly White reduces the pressure on the centre pawn, thereby allowing his opponent to regroup his pieces comfortably.

A critical alternative is 15.♘f4, intending ♕d3 next, to maximize the pressure against the d5-pawn. Black may feel obliged to counter with 15...g5, driving the knight back to h3. In that case Black's superiority in the centre would compensate for the weakening of his kingside.

15...♘e4 16.♕e1



16...♘d7

Couldn't Black have solved the problem of the hanging pawns effectively at this point? Hardly.

On 16...c4, there follows: 17.♗xe7 ♕xe7 18.♕xa5 cxd3 19.exd3 (19.♕xb6 ♘d2! is less clear) 19...♘c5 20.♕xb6 ♖c6 21.♕a5 ♘xb3

22.♖ae1 and the crisis rather resolves itself in White's favour.

17.♖d1 ♘d6

There was no need for this retreat. A good choice was 17...♕b6, with a complicated position.

18.♘f4

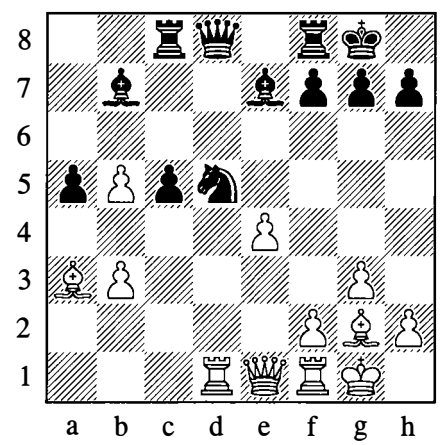
It looks as if White's efforts are starting to bear fruit. And yet it will soon become clear that Black has actually been counting on this natural reply and has prepared a surprising counterstroke to refute his opponent's plan when it is literally on the point of achieving its aim.

Another attempt is 18.♗h3, with the probable continuation: 18...♘xb5 19.axb5 d4 (19...c4?! 20.♗xe7 ♕xe7 21.bxc4 dxc4 22.♘f4 ♖fd8 23.♕xa5 gives White an extra pawn and a good position.) 20.♖c1 f5! and Black has his full share of the play.

18...♘xb5 19.axb5 ♘f6 20.♘xd5

The pawn has succumbed, and White is ready to celebrate a successful conclusion to his siege of the hanging pawns.

20...♘xd5 21.e4



Evidently at this point Euwe was only counting on: 21...♕b6 22.exd5 ♗d6 23.♕e2 ♖b8 24.♖c1 ♗a8 (24...♗c8 25.♕c4) 25.♖c3 ♕xb5 26.♕xb5 ♖xb5 27.♖fc1 and White has strong pressure on the c5-pawn.

21...c4!

With this unexpected move Black recovers the pawn, taking the game into a sharp four-rook ending. The further course of the play has no bearing on the problem of hanging pawns, and we give it with little comment.

22.♗xe7 ♕xe7 23.exd5 ♕xe1 24.♖xe1 cxb3 25.d6 ♗xg2 26.♔xg2 ♖b8 27.d7 g6?!

A more accurate defence is 27...♖fd8 and ...♔f8.

28.♖a1?!

White could pose more problems by 28.♖d4, although Black can save himself with 28...♔g7 29.♖a1 ♖fd8 30.♖xa5 ♖b6 31.♖b4 ♖xd7 32.♖xb3 ♖d5! (an idea indicated by Botvinnik), and thanks to his badly placed rook on a5, White is unable to improve his position.

28...♖xb5 29.♖e8 ♖d5 30.♖xa5 ♖xd7 31.♖xf8† ♔xf8 32.♖b5 ♖d3

Now it is Black who has emerged with an extra pawn – which is passed and far advanced. However, Alekhine adopted an incorrect plan that involved pushing his pawns on the kingside; he created weaknesses on that part of the board, and Euwe's technical defence secured the draw.

...½–½

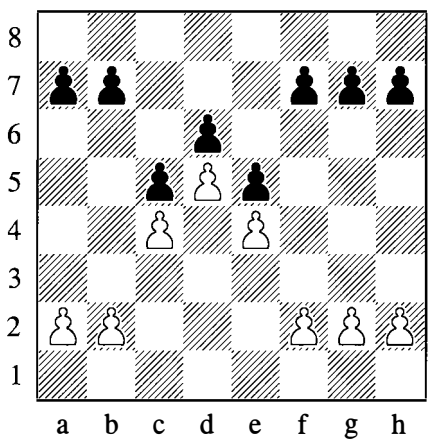
This game effectively reveals both the positional weakness of hanging pawns and their potential strength which lies in the threat of their advance.

Chapter 5

More about Active Pawn Play – The Pawn Wedge and How to React to It – The "Nail" Pawn – The Phalanx of e- and f-pawns – The Pawn Storm

We have satisfied ourselves that the role of the pawns is by no means confined to exerting positional pressure, controlling squares of a particular colour and securing convenient outposts for the pieces; the pawns also constitute a powerful means of attack. Without active support from the pawns, attacks with the pieces are often doomed to fail – they come up against a bristling defensive pawn array on the opposing side. Consequently, one of the chief aggressive tasks of your own pawns is to eliminate your opponent's protective pawn lines in the sector where you are planning your offensive. If such pawn attacks are conducted against the opponent's castled position, they often lead to direct mating threats against the exposed king.

In the practice of active pawn play, one familiar structure is a central formation with the picturesque name of a pawn wedge. The pattern of such a wedge, "driven into" the opponent's position, looks like this:



It should be noted that the e4-d5-c4 structure (or e5-d4-c5 for Black) is still called a wedge if one of the opponent's pawns on the files adjacent to the forward pawn is still on its starting square – c7 or e7 (c2 or e2). A wedge of this kind is more dynamic (there are prospects of advancing with c4-c5 or e4-e5 for White, corresponding to ...c5-c4 or ...e5-e4 for Black), but then again less stable owing to the possibility of an undermining move, ...c7-c6 or ...e7-e6 (c2-c3 or e2-e3).

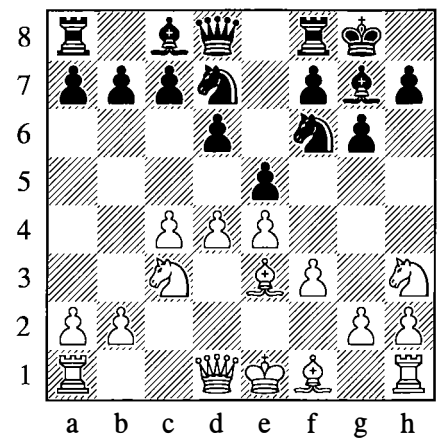
The basic method of fighting against a wedge is an undermining advance of the f-pawn. The wedge formation can have advantages or disadvantages which are determined by a careful appraisal of the position. The wedge of course permits you to gain space and cramp your opponent – but at the same time it limits your own dynamic resources and correspondingly increases *his*, owing to the clear prospect of lively pawn play on the kingside. It scarcely pays to construct a wedge just in order to cramp your opponent in some degree. The wedge formation is only justified when you can count on retaining the initiative, or when there is at least the possibility of stopping the enemy f-pawn from advancing.

It is White more often than Black who has recourse to setting up a pawn wedge. The device forms a logical component of White's game plan in some variations of the King's Indian Defence or Ruy Lopez that are rich in ideas. Nimzowitsch was the author of an interesting plan involving the construction of a wedge in the King's Indian Defence.

A. Nimzowitsch – S. Tartakower

King's Indian Defence
Carlsbad 1929

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♗e3 ♘bd7 7.♘h3 e5



8.d5 a5

Black's plan consists of stationing his knight on c5 (for this purpose he secures his position against b2-b4), then bringing the other knight to h5, d7 or e8 and initiating the standard play based on the undermining move ...f5. Such a plan has often brought success.

9.♘f2 b6 10.♕d2 ♘c5

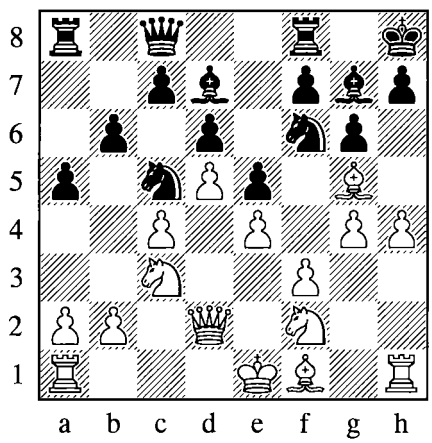
As Nimzowitsch himself indicates, Black should have continued with 10...♘h5, and if 11.g4 then 11...♘f4! 12.♗xf4 exf4 13.♕xf4 f5 14.gxf5 gxf5. Then 15.exf5 is bad in view of 15...♘e5 16.♗h3 ♕h4.

11.♗g5!

White fixes the knight to the f6-square and intends to undertake a kingside pawn offensive while Black is trying to free himself from the pin. This is what constitutes Nimzowitsch's plan.

11...♗d7 12.g4 ♕c8 13.h4 ♔h8

Black has not managed to carry out ...f5; White is the one attacking on the kingside. In these circumstances the construction of the wedge is more than justified.



14.h5 gxh5 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♖xh5

In what followed, the squares h5 and f5 proved superb outposts for White's pieces, and

on this foundation he conducted the game to victory.

...1–0

After this game, the idea of a wedge and a subsequent attack with the h- and g-pawns found wide application in chess practice. A similar plan was implemented in the following game.

V. Makogonov – V. Smyslov

Sverdlovsk 1943

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3 ♘bd7 4.e4 e5 5.d5

So White opts for a wedge without giving it a thought.

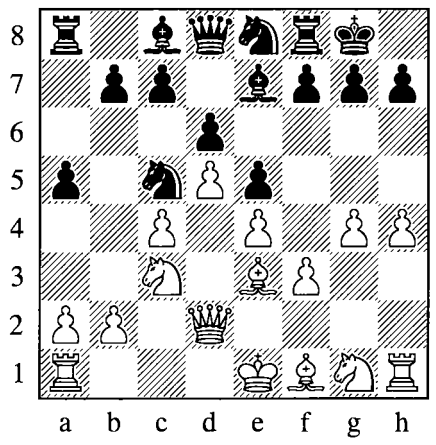
In this position many players would prefer to carry on the fight with the central tension maintained, by 5.♘f3.

Another good plan of development was 5.g3 followed by ♘ge2 and ♗g2, attempting to keep the square d5 as a possible point of invasion with the pieces.

5...♘c5 6.f3 a5 7.♗e3 ♗e7

In the face of White's plan, developing the bishop on g7 would be pointless. White has deployed his pieces in almost the same way as Nimzowitsch did in the preceding game.

8.♕d2 0–0 9.g4 ♘e8 10.h4!



10...c6

Black has to undertake something against the wedge that is cramping him. Admittedly nothing is threatening the black king for the moment, seeing that his pawn shield is in its starting position, but White has ways of developing his initiative further, for instance with the manoeuvre ♘g1-e2-g3-f5.

It would be risky to play 10...♗xh4† 11.♔d1 and now 11...♗e7 12.♕h2 h6 13.♗xh6, or 11...g5 12.♕h2 f6 13.♗f2, when White recovers the pawn and retains aggressive possibilities in the h-file.

11.0–0–0 cxd5

Unfortunately for Black, 11...a4 at once, intending ...♕a5, drops a pawn to 12.dxc6, since ♗xc5 is threatened.

12.♘xd5 ♗e6 13.♘e2 ♗xd5 14.exd5 a4

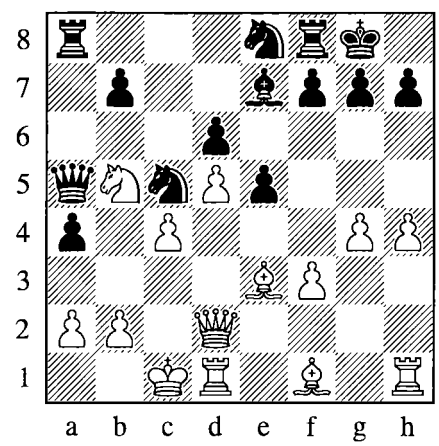
Clearing the centre with 14...e4 15.fxe4 ♘xe4 16.♕c2 ♘c5 17.g5 f6 18.♔b1 is in White's favour.

15.♘c3 ♕a5

Again 15...♗xh4 is dangerous, on account of 16.g5 ♗g3 17.♘e2.

16.♘b5

The pawn on d5 still stands and is seriously cramping Black.



16...♕b6

Black has a weak queenside pawn structure, and this makes him avoid exchanges. Indeed after 16...♕xd2† 17.♖xd2 b6 18.♗d3, White has a powerful position and the a4-pawn is doomed.

17.♕f2 ♖d8 18.a3 ♘c7 19.♗xc5

Leading by force to the win of the a4-pawn.

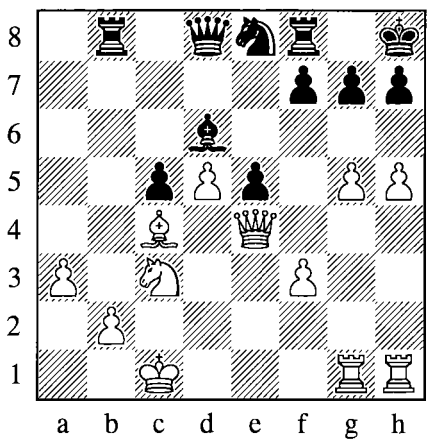
19...dxc5 20.♘c3 ♕a5 21.♗d3 b5 22.♕c2 bxc4 23.♗xc4

23.♗xh7† ♔h8 24.♕f5 ♘e8 25.♘e4 is also good enough.

23...♕b6 24.♘xa4 ♕f6 25.♕e4 ♗d6 26.♘c3 ♖b8 27.g5 ♕d8 28.♖dg1

An even more energetic line was 28.♗d3 g6 29.♖dg1, with h4-h5 to follow.

28...♘e8 29.h5 ♔h8



30.♕f5

Preparing ♗d3, which just now would be met by 30...f5.

30...♕c8

This is the only defence against ♗d3, but now White has no difficulty winning the ending, in which, apart from his extra pawn, he enjoys positional superiority thanks to the fine base for his pieces on e4 and the passed d5-pawn – the result of constructing a pawn wedge in the opening stage. The rest of the game is of no interest for our topic; Black resigned on the 54th move.

...1–0

In the next game White set up a wedge ignoring the conventional reaction with ...f5. There was not long to wait for the consequences.

V. Alatortsev – G. Levenfish

Bogo-Indian Defence
10th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1937

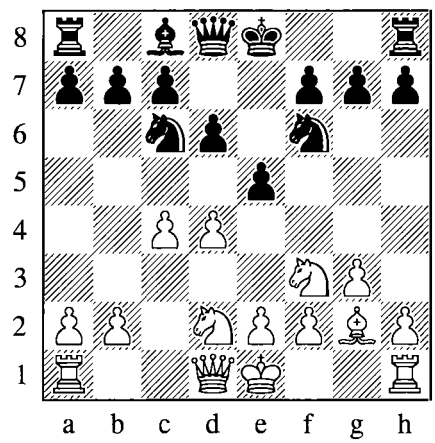
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 ♗xd2† 5.♘xd2

The dark-squared bishops are exchanged. This circumstance is one thing that both sides should take into account in their planning.

5...♘c6 6.♘gf3 d6

Black is preparing ...e5, which is fully in keeping with the bishop exchange – it is the dark squares in the centre that the pawns are taking under control. The alternative plan with ...d5 would be less logical and would make Black's queenside development more difficult.

7.♗g2 e5



8.d5

Here, setting up the wedge-shaped salient has little justification. There might be some motivation for it if, by following with e2-e4 and f2-f4, White could start an all-out offensive in the centre. A wedge is supposed to cramp Black, but in this case the main point of the cramp – restricting the scope of the black king's bishop – does not apply. Actually with d4-d5 White *is* limiting the king's bishop's sphere of action, but it is his own bishop, not his opponent's.

White should have continued with 8.e3 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.exd4 ♕e7† 11.♕e2 or 8.♘b3 ♕e7 9.e3, roughly maintaining the balance.

8...♘e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.e4

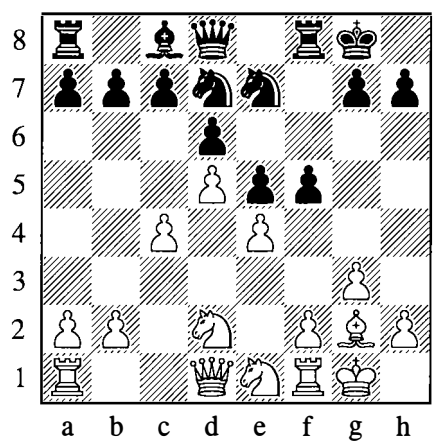
Even now 10.e3 would have been better, aiming for example to meet 10...c6 with 11.dxc6 bxc6 12.♕c2 followed by ♖ad1; or if 11...♘xc6, then 12.♕e2 d5 13.cxd5 ♘xd5 14.♖fd1.

10...♘d7

Black is clearly aiming for ...f5. With this in mind, White should be planning to capture on f5 in reply and then strive for queenside play with c4-c5, utilizing the e4-square as a base for his pieces.

11.♘e1 f5

Without a minute's delay, as after ♘d3 White would be threatening to counter with f2-f4.



12.♘d3

A decent alternative is to capture the pawn by 12.exf5 and follow up with ♘e4.

Or White could even resolve on 12.f4. Then after 12...exf4 13.gxf4 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘f5 15.♘c2 he would emerge with weaknesses, but they would be defensible.

12...f4

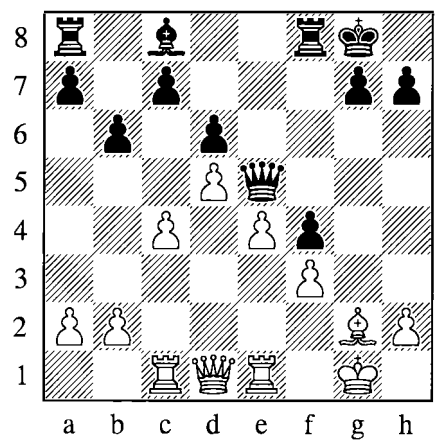
In this way Black prevents f2-f4 for which White was now prepared

13.gxf4?

By no means a desirable exchange. As the game goes, Black obtains a strongpoint for his pieces in the very centre of the board, on e5 – and on the basis of this, he eventually achieves victory. Viewed in this light, White's construction of a pawn wedge in the opening appears doubly suspect.

Admittedly if this pawn is not captured, Black threatens with ...♘g6 to make it into a "nail" pawn embedded in the opponent's position. Still, either 13.♗h3 or 13.♖c1 (attempting to carry out c4-c5), reaches a position with chances for both sides.

13...exf4 14.♘f3 ♘g6 15.♖c1 ♕e7 16.♖e1 ♘de5 17.♘fxe5 ♘xe5 18.f3 b6 19.♘xe5 ♕xe5



Black threatens, after ...♗d7, to start a decisive kingside pawn storm with ...g5 and ...h5. White hastens to force a queen exchange, but even this is little help.

20.♕d2 ♗d7 21.♕c3 ♖fe8 22.♕xe5 ♖xe5 23.a3 a5 24.b3 ♔f7 25.♔f2 ♔f6 26.♔e2 ♖h5 27.♖h1 ♔e5

And White lost after Black had achieved the ...g7-g5-g4 advance. At the moment when White resigned, that famous pawn wedge c4-d5-e4 was still beautifully in place.

...0–1

In conclusion, let us look at some games which will shed light on the theme of a pawn wedge within the context of a unified, planned process.

J.R. Capablanca – F. Marshall

Reti Opening
Moscow 1925

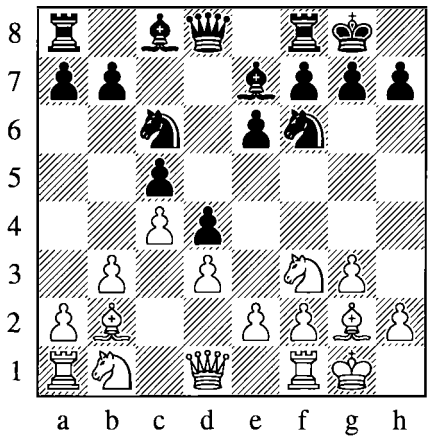
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.b3 c5 5.♗g2 ♘c6 6.0–0 ♗e7

Both now and later White is not only unafraid of his opponent constructing a wedge, he actually provokes him into playing ...d4.

On the other hand, there are players who don't enjoy fighting against a pawn triangle in the centre and prefer 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 (White answers 7...exd5 with 8.d4, playing to isolate the d5-pawn.) 8.♗b2; although after 8...♗f6 the activity of both white bishops is noticeably limited.

7.d3 0–0 8.♗b2 d4

The extent to which even the leading chess authorities diverge in their judgements on the role of the pawn wedge can be gauged from the fact that one of this game's annotators, Bogoljubow, gave Black's last move an exclamation mark and added: "It is clear that White's opening is strategically refuted." Capablanca obviously took a different view.



9.e4!

A critical move! White wants to induce the reply ...e5 and then begin preparing the f2-f4 break, which constitutes the trusted method of combating a pawn wedge. Of course this doesn't mean that executing such a plan must necessarily lead to advantage for White. When White carries out f2-f4, Black must be ready to reply with exf4 and then meet gxf4 with ...f5. Events might proceed something like this: 9...e5 10.a3 a5 11.♘bd2 ♗d7 12.♕c2 ♘e8 13.♖ae1 ♕c7 14.♔h1 ♘d6 15.♘g1 ♘d8 16.♘e2 ♘e6 17.f4 exf4 18.gxf4 f5 19.e5 ♘f7 20.♘g3 ♘h6, with ...♗c6 to follow – and Black is entitled to some hopes of success in the fight for the initiative.

Marshall, alas, chooses a different path, in radical contradiction to the opening idea of constructing a wedge.

9...dxe3?

Black opens the f-file for White's operations, obligingly presents the long diagonal to the white queen's bishop, and demolishes his own wedge, obtaining nothing in return. The position of the white pawns on e3 and d3 cannot be considered a weakness. They are

easy to defend; essentially, Black doesn't even have anything to attack them with. Indeed the pawns themselves are playing a major role, keeping the central squares under control.

10.fxe3 ♘g4 11.♕e2 ♗f6 12.♘c3 ♕a5

Black has made three attacking moves in succession, but with this his initiative peters out.

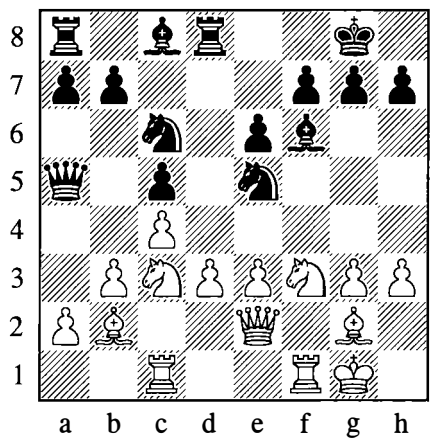
13.♖ac1 ♖d8

Weakening the f7-pawn and hastening his defeat.

But if Black tries to develop his queenside with 13...♗d7, White can secure an advantage with: 14.♘d2 ♘ge5 15.♘de4 (Sacrificing the exchange with 15.♖xf6! gxf6 16.♘ce4 is also strong.) 15...♗e7 16.♘a4, with a tactical threat of ♗c3 (winning the c5-pawn) and a positional threat of d3-d4.

14.h3 ♘ge5

Only the awkward 14...♘h6 would have enabled Black to continue the game.



15.♘e4!

An extremely powerful blow that rapidly destroys the Black position.

15...♕xa2

If 15...♘xf3†, White replies 16.♕xf3, underlining the weakness of the point f7.

Black also fails with 15...♕c7 16.♘xf6† gxf6 17.♘xe5 fxe5 18.♕g4† ♔h8 19.♗xc6.

16.♘xf6† gxf6 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♗e4 ♗d7 19.♖a1 ♕xb3 20.♖fb1

Black could lay down his arms as he is losing his queen, but the game carried on as follows:

20...♕b4 21.♗xe5 fxe5 22.♖xb4 cxb4 23.♗xb7 ♖ab8 24.♖xa7 b3 25.♕b2 ♗a4 26.♕xe5 ♗c6 27.♕g5† ♔f8 28.♗xc6 b2 29.♕e7†
1–0

Black suffered failure chiefly as a consequence of his 9th move. The pawn at the head of the wedge should stand firm in its forward position and not abandon it, unless of course there are concrete considerations impelling it to do so.

G. Levenfish – I. Kan

Reti Opening
Moscow 1927

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.0–0 ♗e7 6.♘c3 0–0 7.♕c2 c5 8.b3 ♘c6 9.♗b2 d5 10.d3

White allows Black to play ...d4 and proceed to form a triangular wedge. It is true that the attempt to prevent this with 10.cxd5 would hardly have been better. As quite good replies, Black has either 10...♘b4 or the simple 10...♘xd5, and if 11.♘xd5 then 11...♕xd5 – whereupon 12.♘e5? fails to 12...♕xg2†! 13.♔xg2 ♘d4†.

10...d4

So the die is cast. Black wedges his pawn in on d4, where it will restrict White's scope for manoeuvre. But as will be clear from the further course of the game, he is not linking

this decision to a concrete plan. As a result, he fails to exploit the positive side of the wedge formation (constriction of the opponent), while the negative side – the possibility of a White counter-offensive with f2-f4 – soon takes full effect.

11.♘b1 ♕c7

Played in order to prepare 12...e5, but what does Black gain by such a pawn advance? He gives extra point to White's plan with f2-f4, exposes the f5-square in his own camp and achieves nothing concrete. The ...e5 advance is justified in cases where there is a prospect of pushing the pawn further with ...e4, for example when Black has managed to play ...f5. He should have been thinking about the manoeuvre ...♘f6-d7-e5, at the same time as aiming for ...f5 with the e-pawn still on e6.

12.♘bd2 e5 13.a3 ♘h5

Threatening to play ...f5 and then set about implementing the plan based on an attack with ...e4.

14.e4!

White is the first to embark on active operations in the centre, beginning to prepare for the f2-f4 break. The preparation demands a good deal of effort: he will need to play ♖ae1, ♗c1, ♔h1, ♘g1, then ♘d2-f3-h4 and only afterwards f2-f4. Surely during all this time Black will be able to find ways of opposing White's plan with appropriate force?

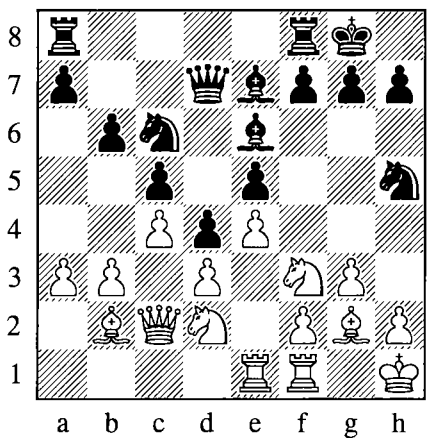
14...♗c8?

Black is playing planlessly; he is simply manoeuvring with his pieces. Many of his moves bear the stamp of conventionality. So it is with this one – Black has evidently decided that his bishop will be better placed in the centre, so he transfers it to e6. Yet in order to thwart his opponent's plan or at least offer resistance to it, he himself needs to strive for ...f5. That move is no good if played at once, as after the reply exf5 White acquires an excellent base for his pieces on e4, and the black e5-pawn becomes a real weakness.

It is therefore essential to make the preparatory move 14...g6, which *does* threaten ...f5; Black can then meet exf5 by taking on f5 with the g-pawn. To be sure, this pawn attack can be prevented temporarily by 15.♖ae1 (15...f5 16.exf5 gxf5 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♗xb7 ♕xb7 19.♖xe5), but Black can continue to fight for it with ...♗d6, or ...♗f6-g7 followed by ...♖ae8. With such a plan, the wedge formation could turn out to be fully justified – White after all is somewhat cramped, and for that reason it is a good deal easier for Black to carry out manoeuvres using his rear lines of communication. Yet instead of playing actively in this manner, Black manoeuvres his pieces without a systematic purpose, and – crucially – he completely fails to prevent his opponent from implementing his own active plan.

15.♖ae1 ♗e6 16.♔h1 ♕d7

By threatening ...♗h3, Black compels White to make a move which... fits in with his plan.



17.♘g1 ♗d6 18.♗c1 g6 19.♘df3! f6

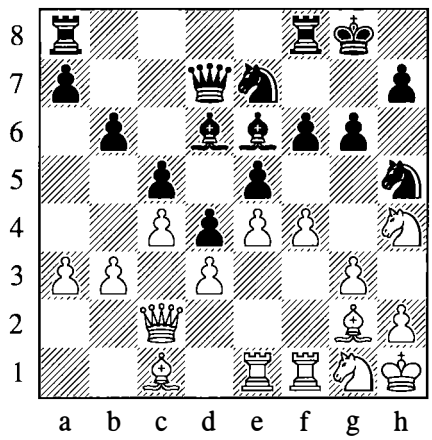
Now 19...f5 is not good, in view of 20.exf5 gxf5 21.♘g5 with dangerous threats;

on 21...♘g7, White continues the attack powerfully with 22.f4.

Black does need to preserve his light-squared bishop from exchange for the moment, seeing that the sphere of influence of his pawn chain embraces dark squares only. To this end, however, it would make sense to return his queen to c7 (19...♕c7 20.♘g5 ♗d7). Incidentally a fourth unit would then be hitting the f4-square, holding up White's attack with f2-f4.

20.♘h4 ♘e7 21.f4

So White has managed to carry out the operation that constitutes the principal means of fighting against a wedge formation.



He now threatens to play f4-f5, making use of the fact that the rook on a8 is in the firing line of the bishop on g2 – but Black removes his rook from the danger square, and at first sight White's attack comes to a dead end.

21...♖ab8

The rook moves to this square to support active operations on the queenside after ...b5.

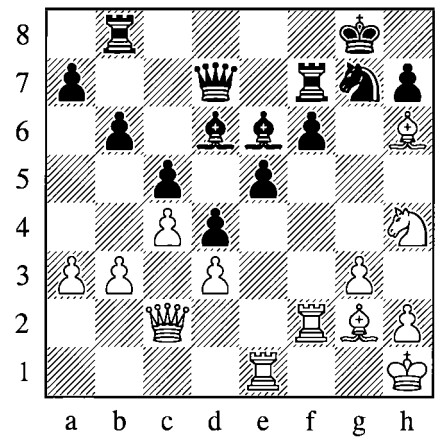
22.f5

At the cost of a pawn sacrifice, White endeavours to find convenient posts on the light squares for his pieces. This is probably the only way to continue the attack. Black is forced to accept the sacrifice, as in the event of 22...♗f7 23.fxg6 ♗xg6 24.♗h6 ♘g7 25.♗h3 White would be in control of the whole board.

22...gxf5 23.♗h6 ♘g7 24.exf5 ♘xf5 25.♘xf5 ♗xf5 26.♘f3 ♗e6

After 26...♗h3 27.♘h4 ♗xg2† 28.♕xg2 ♖f7 29.♗xg7 ♔xg7 30.♘f5† White would obtain an overwhelming positional advantage (a permanent knight!).

27.♖f2 ♖f7 28.♘h4



28...b5

Black sets his hopes on opening the queenside.

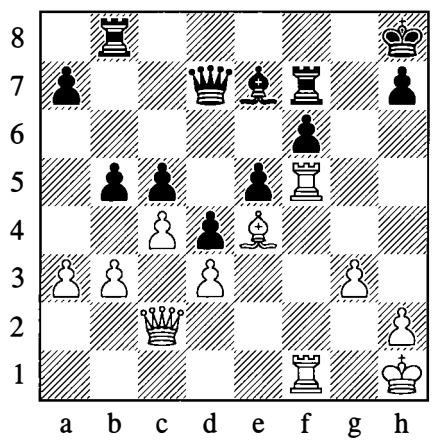
29.♖ef1 ♗e7 30.♗xg7 ♔xg7 31.♘f5† ♔h8 32.♗e4 ♗xf5?

It is only after this unforced exchange that White can think about something more than just compensation for the pawn.

33.♖xf5

We now have a position with opposite-coloured bishops. In the endgame they often serve to secure a draw, even when the opponent has a significant material plus. On the other hand in the middlegame, time and again, the

presence of opposite bishops makes it easier for the attacking side to achieve victory. This usually depends on the arrangement of the pawn chains. In the present game, Black's principal pawn group extends over the dark squares – f6-e5-d4-c5 (the wedge!). At the same time he has a dark-squared bishop, which on all sides encounters a barrier in the shape of Black's own pawns. His opponent's bishop is a different matter – the all-important light-square thoroughfares of the board are swept by its fire. If, to this, you add that Black's f6-pawn is weak, that his king position is insecure (with its last protective cover, the h7-pawn, exposed to attack) and that on the weak light squares of the kingside the enemy rooks hold sway – then it becomes clear that White has attained a decided plus.



33...♖g7 34.♕d2 bxc4 35.bxc4 ♖b6

The wedge stands unshakable in the middle of the board, just as before – but by now it is not Black's joy but his bane.

36.♕h6 ♗d8 37.a4 a5

White would answer 37...♕xa4 with 38.♖xe5.

38.♗d5

Now ♖xe5 is actually threatened.

38...♕e7

Better 38...♕e8, so that in the event of 39.g4 ♖xg4 40.♖xe5! Black can reply 40...♗e7 (or even 40...fxe5! 41.♖f8† ♖g8).

39.♕h5

Of course White doesn't need to hurry, as Black is in a fairly helpless situation.

All the same, 39.g4 was more energetic. The pawn cannot be taken in view of 40.♖xe5, but how then is Black to prevent g4-g5...?

39...♖g6 40.♖5f2 ♕d7 41.♗e4 ♖g5 42.♕h6 ♕g7 43.♕h3 ♕c7 44.♕h6 ♕g7 45.♕h3 ♕c7

The repetitive manoeuvres with the queens are obviously to be explained as the last moves before the time control. With that behind him, White sets about finishing his plan, that is, exploiting his positional light-square advantage. A material plus – an extra pawn – is still on his opponent's side.

46.♖f5 ♖xf5

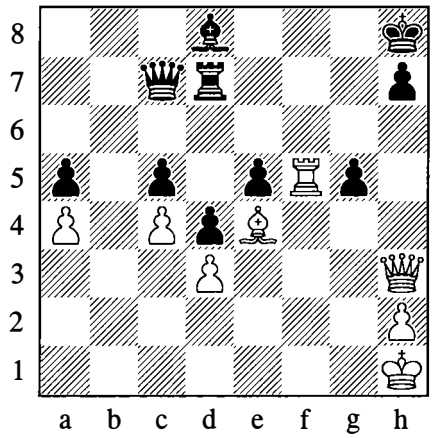
If 46...♖g7, then 47.g4 and White threatens 48.g5 ♖xg5 49.♖xg5 fxg5 50.♖f8† ♔g7 51.♖e8 ♖h6 52.♕f5 ♕d6 (or 52...♗f6) 53.♗d5, deciding the game.

47.♖xf5 ♖d6?

Black should do something about mitigating the threat to h7 while leaving his rook in its active position; thus, 47...♕d7 48.g4 ♔g8!, and now on 49.♖h5 Black can play 49...♕xa4, while 49.g5 is met by 49...♖b1† 50.♔g2 ♕g7.

48.g4 ♖d7 49.g5! fxg5

The endgame after 49...♖f7 50.g6 ♖g7 51.♖h5 ♕d7 52.♖xh7† ♖xh7 53.♕xh7† ♕xh7 54.gxh7 is completely hopeless. Black won't be able to stop the white king from penetrating to the queenside via e4.



50.♖xe5?

After this mistaken move, Black saves himself. It does sometimes happen that your exertions over a long stretch of moves, based on a correct plan and sound strategy, are rendered fruitless by one tactical inaccuracy.

Black is quickly mated after 50.♖f8† ♔g7 51.♖e8!, with the deadly threat of ♕xh7†. If 51...h6, then 52.♕f5; nor is 51...♔f6 any better, in view of 52.♕h6† or 52.♕f5†.

50...♕xe5 51.♕xd7 ♕e7

The opposite bishops now herald a draw, and the game ended with that result.

...½–½

Let us look at another game that is characteristic of the modern practical and theoretical trends.

L. Polugaevsky – A. Suetin

King's Indian Defence
25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3

This way of playing the White side of the King's Indian Defence is of long standing, and in recent years it has been seen in practice more and more frequently. Botvinnik too, as is well known, adhered to this treatment of the King's Indian in his 1958 World Championship match against Smyslov. The seemingly very modest advance of the f-pawn is of great significance for White's plan. There is far more to it than the simple purpose of fortifying one of the chief components of the pawn centre – the e4-pawn. White's plan consists in setting up a wedge and then, by means of g2-g4, opposing the ...f5 counterattack. If Black refrains from ...f5, he will not only be severely cramped by the wedge; White will also have the possibility of developing a dangerous pawn attack on the kingside by h2-h4-h5. All these "trumps" were to be utilized by White in the present game.

5...0–0 6.♗e3 e5

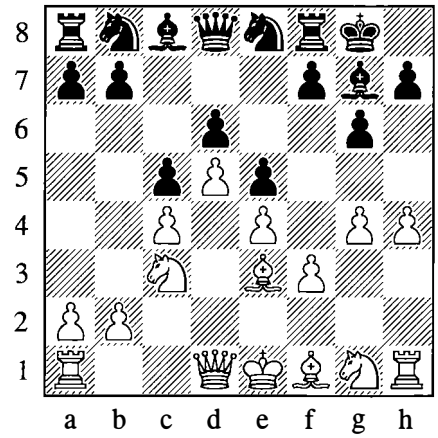
If Black doesn't take steps to fix the situation in the centre, then after ♕d2 and 0–0–0 White will have no difficulty developing a formidable kingside attack (g2-g4, h2-h4-h5, ♗h6) behind the cover of his centre pawns. This explains why Black assents to his opponent's construction of a wedge; even after g2-g4 he envisages sharpening the play with ...f5.

Smyslov, in his last match with Botvinnik, tried opposing White's plan by means of energetic pawn play on the queenside (...a6, ...c6 and ...b5). This counterattacking idea has yet to receive sufficient practical testing; in the match, at any rate, it failed to hold up.

7.d5 c5

This blocking of the c4-pawn usually involves attacking the central wedge with pawns from the queenside; Black subsequently endeavours to play ...a6 and ...b5. In the present game this does not come about, and the move ...c5 loses its point.

8.g4 ♘e8 9.h4



This position eloquently testifies to the way in which modern notions of the opening struggle have changed.

According to classical principles, the basic opening tasks of the players have not been accomplished. The pieces are almost undeveloped; it is mainly the pawns that have been moving. (White has made seven moves out of ten with them!) And yet, contrary to the opinion of some opening theorists, the opening stage can be considered to be over. The plans of both players, especially White, have been determined – and a battle of plans is already a middlegame process.

In the same tournament the diagram position was reached in two other games: Tal – Boleslavsky (played earlier than this one) and Kotov – Spassky (played later). The former ended in victory for Black, the latter for White; though these results were only slightly attributable to the opening.

9...f5

At this point Spassky, against Kotov, adopted the bold and logical plan of 9...a6 10.♗d3 b5. White didn't risk accepting the pawn sacrifice, but Black still succeeded in working up a dangerous queenside attack along the b-file, to counterbalance his opponent's play on the kingside.

Against Tal, Boleslavsky played 9...f5 as in the present game.

10.gxf5 gxf5 11.exf5

White seeks to exchange the light-squared bishops (11...♗xf5 12.♗d3), after which the outpost for his knight on e4 and the dangerous weakening of the e6-square, entailing a threat of ♘g1-h3-g5-e6, will guarantee him good prospects.

In Tal – Boleslavsky, Black now resolved on an interesting pawn sacrifice: 11...♗xf5 12.♗d3 e4. With the experience of that game in mind, Black here chooses a different continuation.

11...♗f6

The aim is not so much to win the h4-pawn (since opening the h-file would be very risky) as rather to take the f5-pawn with the knight (...♘e8-g7xf5).

12.♗d3 ♘g7!

In the event of 12...♗xh4† 13.♔d2 ♗xf5 14.♗xf5 ♖xf5 15.♕e2, followed by ♘h3 and ♖ag1†, White's attack plays itself.

13.♕e2 ♗xh4†

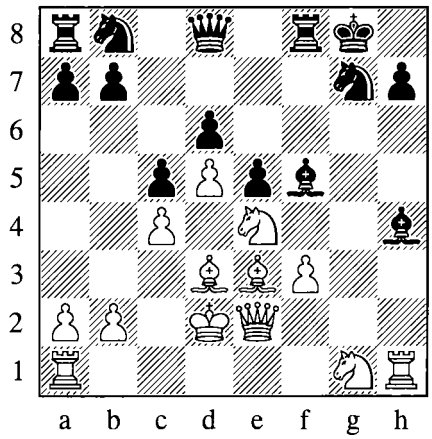
Black does after all yield to the temptation, clearly underestimating the importance of the h-file that he is opening, and overrating the instability of White's king position. Instead of this risky capture, he should have kept to his planned course of action and tried to preserve his light-squared bishop, which has a major role to play in defending the kingside and covering the squares e6 and e4.

In the event of 13...♘xf5 14.♗xf5 ♗xf5 15.0–0–0 ♔h8 16.♘h3 ♘d7 the initiative is of course with White, but Black might not be unsuccessful in resisting the pressure exerted by the pawn wedge.

14.♔d2 ♗xf5

White also has a fierce attack after 14...♘xf5 15.♕h2! ♘xe3 16.♔xe3 ♗g5† 17.♔e2.

15.♘e4



White threatens to take the pawn on d6; and 15...♗xe4 is unsatisfactory, as after 16.♗xe4 the point h7 cannot be defended.

15...♗e7

Returning the pawn would be better than giving White another few tempos for developing his initiative. After 15...♘a6!? 16.a3! (not 16.♘xd6? ♕a5†) 16...♗g6, if White continues with 17.♘xd6?! ♕xd6 18.♖xh4 ♕f6, the position remains sharp. However, White's attack is still difficult to stop if he plays 17.♘h3 without being sidetracked from his general plan.

16.♘h3 b5 17.♖ag1 bxc4 18.♗c2 ♕a5† 19.♘c3 ♗xc2 20.♔xc2

The attack on the h- and g-files cannot be repelled.

20...♘a6 21.♗h6 ♘b4† 22.♔b1 ♖f7 23.♘g5 ♗xg5 24.♖xg5 ♖b8 25.♗xg7 ♖xg7 26.♖xg7† ♔xg7 27.♕e4 ♖h8 28.♕f5 1–0

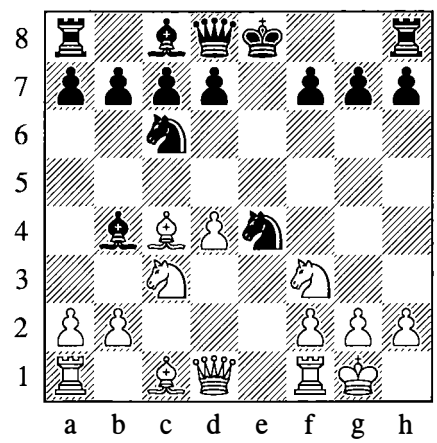
The ferocious destructive power inherent in pawn attacks can reveal itself not only in groups of pawns but in a lone pawn, especially when we are dealing with a so-called "nail" pawn. By this we mean a pawn that has forced its way to the sixth rank (the third rank in Black's case) and firmly established itself there. It can indeed be compared to a nail that is hammered deep into the array of the hostile forces. If a wedge – that is, a pawn fortified on the fifth rank – constricts the opponent, then a nail on the sixth positively fetters his forces and serves as a support for highly dangerous attacks with the pieces.

Let us illustrate this with some examples.

R. Spielmann – E. Cohn

Giuoco Piano
Carlsbad 1907

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♗b4† 7.♘c3 ♘xe4 8.0–0



8...0–0

At this point the opening manuals chiefly examine the continuation 8...♗xc3 9.d5 ♗f6 10.♖e1 ♘e7 11.♖xe4, which is known as the Moller Attack.

9.d5 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 ♘e7 11.♖e1 ♘f6

11...♘xc3 is unsatisfactory in view of 12.♕d4 b5 13.♗g5.

12.d6!

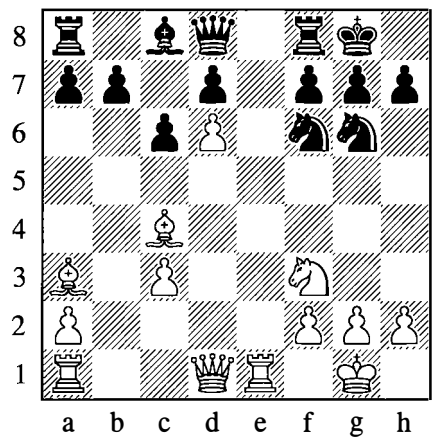
White tries to "drive the nail in" on d6, and he unexpectedly succeeds.

12...♘g6?

12...♘f5, setting up a second attack on the d6-point, should certainly be preferred, when both 13.♗a3 ♘xd6 and 13.dxc7 ♕xc7 are acceptable for Black.

13.♗a3! c6

After 13...cxd6 there would follow 14.♗xd6 ♖e8 15.♕b3 ♘h8 16.♘e5 or 16.♘g5, with an irresistible attack.



14.♘e5

White's plan has taken shape. Under cover of the nail pawn which ties his opponent down, he aims to assail the black king's position with superior forces. With this last move he eliminates one of the black knights that are shielding the castled position. Black is unable to repel this onslaught. The queenside reserves, restrained by the nail pawn, cannot come to his aid in time.

14.♖e7! is another promising way for White to proceed.

14...♘xe5 15.♖xe5 b6 16.♕f3 ♗b7 17.♖ae1 ♖b8 18.♗c1 b5

18...c5 is met by 19.♕h3, threatening ♗g5.

19.♗d3 ♘d5

If Black plays 19...h6 to rid himself of the threat of ♗g5, he is condemned to perish quickly after 20.♖e7.

20.♗xh7†!

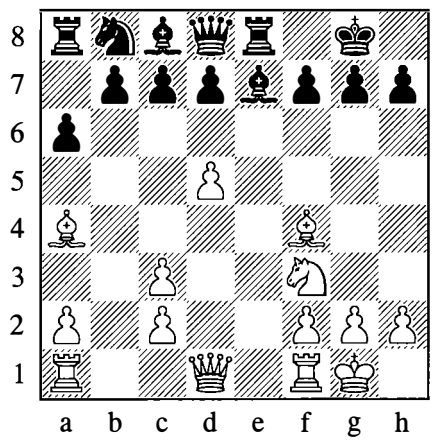
Mate is inevitable. A pretty variation is 20...♔xh7 21.♖h5† ♔g8 22.♕h3 g6 23.♖h8† ♔g7 24.♕h6† ♔f6 25.♖h7 ♔f5 26.♕h3† ♔f6 27.♕h4† ♔f5 28.g4#. Of course, the mate can also be forced by other means.

1–0

The strength of a nail pawn in the same place, d6, was utilized in instructive fashion in the following game.

G. Maroczy – H.Pillsbury

Nuremberg 1896



12...♗f6?

Black offers White the opportunity to "drive the nail in" on d6. Pillsbury had of course seen the move 13.d6, but thanks to his backward development Black's position is unsatisfactory anyway.

The variation 12...b5 13.♗b3 d6 14.♘d4 probably seemed to him to be just as forlorn.

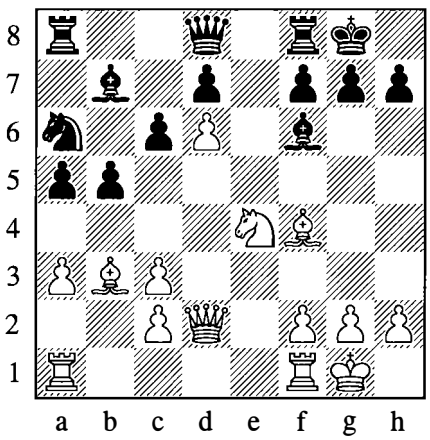
The mighty knight can only be destroyed by ...♗f6xd4, but in that case White has a large positional plus.

13.d6 c6

Allowing the enemy bishop onto the weak d6-square after 13...cxd6 is also a dismal prospect.

14.♗b3 b5 15.♕d2 ♗b7 16.♘g5 ♖f8 17.♘e4 a5 18.a3 ♘a6

Black's misfortune is that he cannot bring his queen's rook into the battle, and for this the white nail pawn on d6 is chiefly to blame.



19.♖ae1 c5 20.♗d5 ♗xd5 21.♕xd5 b4 22.♖e3 ♗xc3?

Black's position is difficult, but this move leads to immediate loss.

23.♖xc3

23.♘xc3 bxc3 24.♗g5 is even simpler, as queen moves are met by 25.♗f6 gxf6 26.♖g3† ♔h8 27.♕f5, leading to mate.

23...bxc3 24.♗g5 ♘c7

If the queen moves away, the check on f6 is decisive. Once again, it isn't hard to see that all these attacks are founded on the powerful position of the nail pawn.

25.♕c4 ♕e8 26.dxc7

26.♘f6† also wins.

26...♕e5 27.♖d1 ♖e8 28.♖xd7 ♔h8 29.♕xf7 ♕xg5 30.f4 ♕g4 31.h3 ♕xd7 32.♕xd7 ♖xe4 33.c8=♕†

The nail pawn has queened.

1–0

Let us now look at a game in which a nail pawn constituted the main goal of the attacking plan and supplied the basis for a mating formation.

R. Teichmann – A. Rubinstein

Ruy Lopez
Carlsbad 1911

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0–0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0–0 9.d3

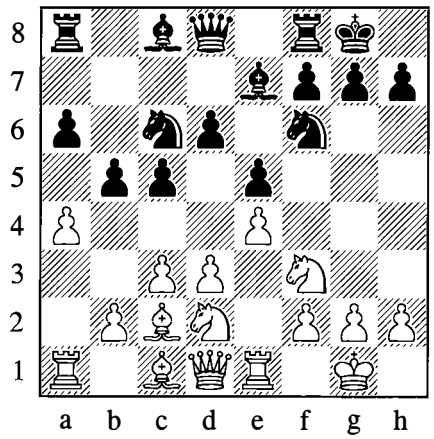
In contemporary practice 9.h3 is a good deal more frequently seen, with d2-d4 to follow. The (apparently!) modest move that White selects in this game doesn't at all indicate that he is renouncing the pawn push to d4; he is merely putting it off until later, intending to prepare it more thoroughly. On the other hand, such slow tactics mean that Black too has possibilities for mobilizing his forces harmoniously, and that may be why this variation occurs comparatively rarely.

9...♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.♘bd2 ♘c6

This position arose in a number of games from the 1930s. Practice showed that Black shouldn't be in a hurry with the counter-offensive ...d5; he should prepare it carefully with ...♕c7, ...h6, ...♗e6 and ...♖ad8.

12.a4

In Alekhine – Eliskases, Podebrady 1936, the continuation was 12.♘f1 ♖e8 13.♘e3 d5? 14.exd5 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 ♕xd5 16.d4! exd4 17.♗e4 with a strong initiative for White, which led to a win as early as move 25.



12...♗b7

Developing the queen's bishop on the long diagonal in this variation has little to justify it. With the white pawns on d3 and e4, the action of this bishop is very limited.

But the chief defect of Black's idea is the dangerous weakening of the f5-square, which is precisely the goal of the white knight's march: ♘d2-f1-g3-f5.

Black had a number of suitable continuations, of which 12...♗e6 deserved the most attention.

13.♘f1 ♕c7 14.♘g3 g6

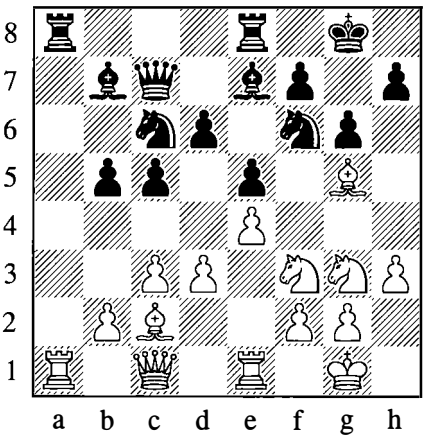
He can't allow the knight in on f5, so he has to concede an unpleasant weakening of his kingside.

15.♗g5 ♖ad8 16.axb5 axb5 17.♕c1 ♖fe8 18.h3

The start of a large-scale offensive plan, based on an advance of the f-pawn.

18...♖a8

If we recall Black's 15th move, it may now seem to have been a pure waste of tempo. Actually this is not so. White has opened up the a-file, and this has altered the situation in a radical manner – and rather to Black's advantage as it seems to Rubinstein, for he will be able to counter White's intended kingside activity with play in the a-file. At the moment, for instance, Black is threatening to seize the file with ...♖xa1 followed by ...♖a8. Nor are things altered by 19.♕d2 ♖a5 and ...♖ea8.



White would like to show that these considerations are unfounded. He plans to bring his knight to g4, from where it will attack the weakened squares f6 and h6; but above all he aims to advance his f-pawn. A careful look at the variations associated with this plan reveals that White's threats can materialize fairly quickly. He therefore voluntarily relinquishes the a-file, concentrating his efforts on attacking Black's castled position.

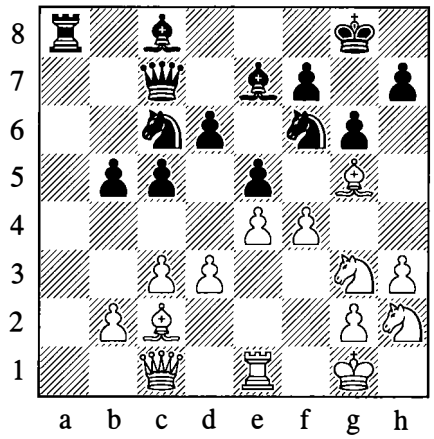
19.♖xa8

With this exchange White keeps his queen in the centre, from where it would have been deflected in the case of ...♖xa1. At the same time he diverts one of black's pieces, either bishop or rook, from the defence of the kingside.

19...♖xa8 20.♘h2 ♗c8

With 20...♘d8! followed by ...♘e6, Black could effectively counter White's plan of advancing his f-pawn.

21.f4



What is Black to do to oppose this dangerous offensive? Aside from 21...♘e8 which Rubinstein chooses, but which proves inadequate to protect the weaknesses in his castled position, there are two plans of defence at his disposal. The first is based on 21...exf4, which at first sight looks bad, since Black himself is opening the thoroughfare for an attack on f7 and helping the enemy queen onto that route. The second plan involves maintaining the tension between the pawns on f4 and e5, and leaving White to decide whether to resolve this tension by exchanging (fxe5) or advancing his f-pawn further (f4-f5).

For the second plan, the most purposeful move seems to be 21...♗d7, so as to connect the black rook to the defence of the kingside. However, careful analysis shows that after 22.♖f1 (threatening fxe5), the ensuing struggle should not go Black's way. On 22...♕d8, which incidentally cuts the rook off from the kingside again, White has 23.f5 ♔g7 24.♗xf6† ♗xf6 25.♘g4, and the point f6 is hard to defend.

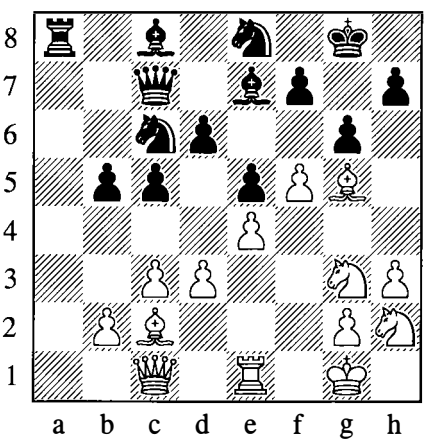
Moreover 23...h5 (instead of 23...♔g7), to keep the knight away from g4, is unsatisfactory in view of 24.fxg6 fxg6 25.♗xf6 ♗xf6 26.♕h6!.

These variations, as well as the actual course of the game, show convincingly that allowing the advance f4-f5 is dangerous for Black.

It remains for us to take a closer look at the "bad" reply, 21...exf4. Events would probably proceed like this: 22.♕xf4 ♕d8 23.♖f1 ♔g7. Then Black may fortify the f7-point with ...♖a7. On 24.♘e2, preparing d3-d4, he could play 24...♗d7 25.d4 cxd4 26.cxd4 ♗e8 with new defensive resources, since the knight on f6 is freed from shielding the f7-point. White of course would still have the initiative, but he would not have the forcing line of attack that he obtains if allowed to play f4-f5.

Rubinstein based his plan of defence on the following thoughts and the actions they entailed: exchange the dark-squared bishops (clearing the air!); then concentrate three defenders – king, knight and queen – on the f6-square, to oppose White's three that can strike against it: queen and rook on the f-file, and the knight from g4. In all this, however, he failed to take into account the weakness of h6, which is another object of White's attack. As for the "nail" pawn on the f-file – it will eventually be hammered in on f6, and will give this attack the decisive support.

21...♘e8 22.f5



Now White threatens to increase the pressure by ♖f1 followed by ♘h2-g4-h6†.

22...♗xg5 23.♕xg5 ♕e7 24.♕h6 ♕f8 25.♕c1 ♕g7 26.♖f1 g5

This move adds to White's gains by handing him the h5-point (which after all is one of the approaches to the crucial square f6), and facilitates his conduct of the attack.

The most stubborn defence, stopping the enemy knights from ranging all over the weak kingside squares, lay in 26...h5, but even then White's initiative would be very strong. There could follow 27.fxg6 fxg6 28.♘f3 with an invasion on g5, or 27.♕d1 threatening 28.fxg6 fxg6 29.♗b3†.

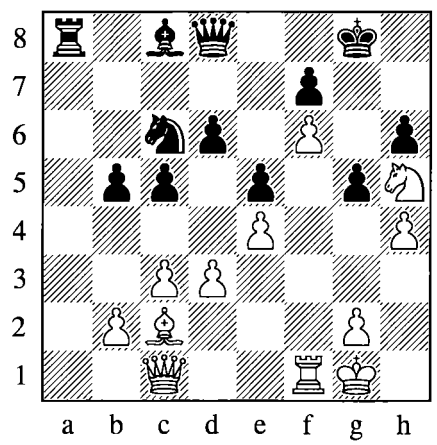
27.♘g4 ♘f6

Black might seem to have a more reliable defence in 27...f6, but White continues 28.♗b3† ♔h8 (28...c4 29.dxc4 ♘a5 30.♕d1) 29.♘h5 ♕f8 30.♗d5 ♗b7 31.h4 h6 (31...gxh4 32.♕e1 followed by ♕xh4, leaves Black with no hope.) 32.hxg5 hxg5 33.♖f3 with the unanswerable threat of ♖h3.

28.♘xf6† ♕xf6 29.h4! h6

Black can't hold out for long after 29...gxh4 either: 30.♘h5 ♕e7 31.♕h6 f6 32.♘xf6† ♔h8 33.♘d5

30.♘h5 ♕d8 31.f6



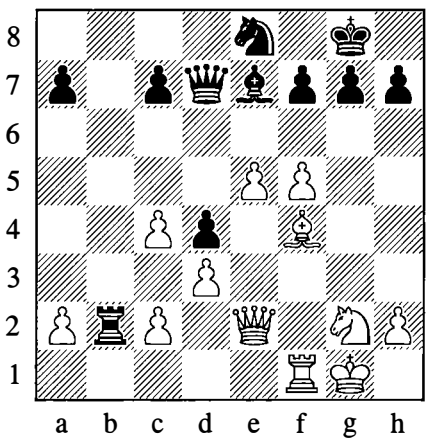
"The nail is driven home", after which Black may quietly lay down his arms, seeing that nothing now will help his king, left entirely on its own.

31...♔h7 32.hxg5 ♗g4 33.♘g7 ♔g6 34.♗d1 ♕d7 35.♘f5 ♗xf5 36.exf5†
1–0

Before focusing our attention on the active operation that goes by the name of a pawn storm, it is as well to broaden our examination of one other theme – namely the action of a phalanx consisting of e- and f-pawns, with the e-pawn on a half-open file.

A. Rubinstein – F. Marshall

Lodz 1908



White's phalanx is ready for decisive breaks with e5-e6 or f5-f6. Events proceeded as follows:

27.♗g3 ♕a4

Of course, losing time by capturing pawns is dangerous – but the threat to the c2-pawn does to some extent constitute a counterattack, and what else does Black have by way of opposing White's menacing phalanx? Not 27...f6, which is unsatisfactory in view of 28.e6 ♕c6 29.♕h5,

and now 29...♖xc2 30.♘e1 or 29...♗c5 30.♕f7† ♔h8 31.e7 h6 32.♘f4 ♖xc2 33.♗f2.

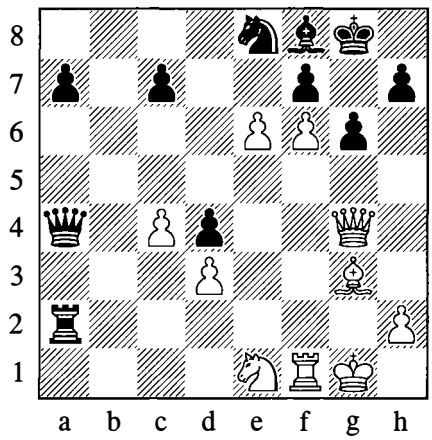
28.♖f2 ♖b1† 29.♖f1 ♖b2

29...♖xf1† 30.♔xf1 ♕xa2 31.♘f4 is no better.

30.f6! ♖xc2

30...gxf6 can be met by 31.♕g4† ♔h8 32.♕xd4 ♕xc2 33.♘e1 ♕d2 34.♕d7.

31.♕g4 ♗f8 32.e6 g6 33.♘e1 ♖xa2



The phalanx has forced its way to the sixth rank and crushes all obstacles in its path.

34.exf7† ♔xf7 35.♘f3 ♘xf6 36.♘g5† ♔g7 37.♖xf6

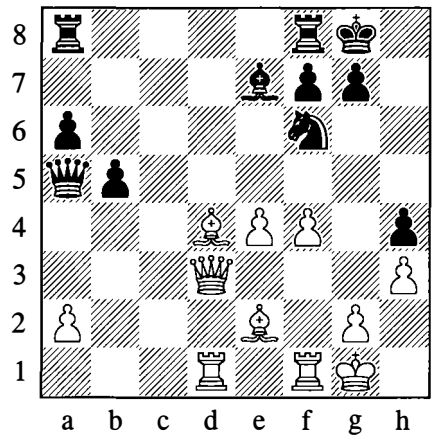
White can also win by other means, such as 37.♕e6 or 37.♗e5.

37...♔xf6 38.♕f4† ♔e7 39.♕f7† 1–0

A decisive storming of the opponent's position, based on a breakthrough with the e- and f-pawn phalanx, was carried out in the following game.

L. Aronin – S. Flohr

18th USSR Championship, Moscow1950



The phalanx is already stationed on the frontier; crossing it leads to the rapid demolition of the opponent's castled position. The game continued:

24.e5 ♘d7 25.f5 ♗c5

Black's aim is to exchange queens so as to blunt the edge of the phalanx's aggressive march. For instance if 26.f6, then 26...♗xd4† 27.♕xd4 ♕b6 and the aim is achieved.

26.♗xc5 ♘xc5 27.♕e3 ♕b6

Again seeking to exchange queens.

28.♔h1 ♖ae8 29.f6

Threatening 30.fxg7 ♔xg7 31.♖f6.

29...gxf6 30.♕h6 ♘e4 31.♖f4 ♖xe5 32.♖xh4 1–0

The following encounter must be considered the historic source game in which the strength of a pawn phalanx on the e- and f-files was displayed in classic style; though it is true that five years earlier, in the Paris tournament of 1878, Zukertort had succeeded in demonstrating the activity of such a phalanx in a relatively simple form, against Bird.

M. Chigorin – J. Zukertort

Ruy Lopez
London 1883

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0–0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♗e7 6.d5

Black is set the most difficult opening problems by 6.♖e1 ♘d6 7.dxe5 ♘xb5 8.a4.

6...♘d6! 7.♗xc6

Black answers 7.♗e2 with 7...e4, and 7.dxc6 with 7...♘xb5. The best continuation is 7.♘c3.

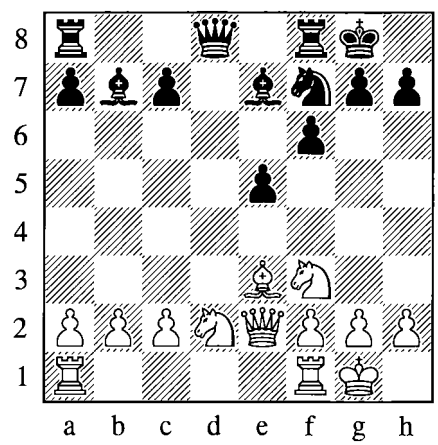
7...dxc6 8.dxc6 f6!

Now Black's phalanx, strictly speaking, is already mobilized. It will very soon start its dangerous advance.

9.cxb7 ♗xb7 10.♗e3 0–0 11.♘bd2 ♘f7!

Now that the e5-pawn is supported, everything is ready for an offensive with the phalanx, and it's hard to see how White can offer successful resistance to it. This is all the result of White's 6th and 7th moves. We see how some outwardly unobtrusive inaccuracies in the opening can allow the opponent a dangerous initiative.

12.♕e2



12...f5 13.♘b3 f4 14.♗c5 e4 15.♘fd4 f3!

The forcing four-move march of the pawn phalanx has already borne fruit.

16.♕b5

16.gxf3 is bad in view of 16...♗xc5 17.♘e6 exf3 18.♕c4 ♕f6, when Black keeps a material plus and White's king position is wide open.

16...♕c8!

With two threats – ...♕g4 and ...♗a6.

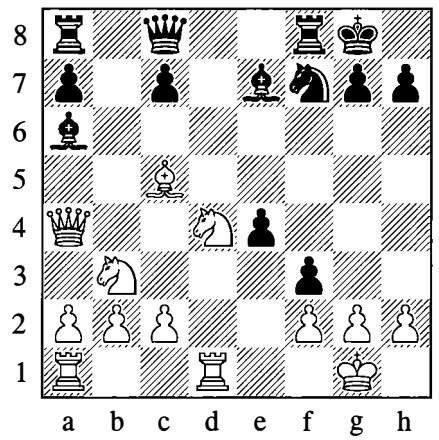
17.♖fd1

White defends shrewdly, preparing to meet 17...♕g4 with 18.g3 ♕h3 19.♕f1.

17...♗a6

To deprive White of the defence just mentioned.

18.♕a4



Again parrying the threat of 18...♕g4, which would be met by 19.♘xf3!. However, the white king's position, shattered by the phalanx, is so precarious that Black easily finds other possibilities for developing his attack.

18...♘g5 19.♘xf3

On 19.♗xe7, Black delivers mate in a few moves: 19...♘h3† 20.♔h1 fxg2† etc.

19...exf3 20.♖d7

Again, 20.♗xe7 is met by 20...♘h3† 21.♔h1 fxg2† 22.♔xg2 ♕b7† 23.♔xh3 ♕f3† 24.♔h4 ♖f4† with a quick mate.

20...fxg2 21.♖xe7 ♘h3† 22.♔xg2 ♘f4† 23.♔f3

Or 23.♔h1 ♗b7†.

23...♕h3†

The conditions for this entire concluding attack, on the light squares and open files, were created by the march of the black f-pawn: ...f6-f5-f4-f3xg2. White's king in the centre of the board, surrounded by enemy pieces, cannot of course hold out for long.

24.♔e4 ♗b7†

Another solution was 24...♗d3† 25.♔d4 (25.cxd3 ♕xd3†) 25...♖ad8† 26.♔c3 ♗b5† 27.♖e3 ♘d5†.

25.♔d4 ♘e6† 26.♔c4 ♖f4† 27.♘d4 ♘xc5 28.♔xc5 ♕h5† 29.♔c4 ♖xd4† 0–1

In another classic game, the attack with the phalanx of e- and f-pawns develops in much more complicated circumstances, where the opponent has his own phalanx of hanging centre pawns working for him, and for some time the struggle is double-edged.

A. Halprin – H. Pillsbury

Queen's Gambit
Vienna 1898

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e3 c5 4.b3 cxd4 5.exd4 ♘c6 6.c4 ♗g4 7.♗e2 e6

Evidently the variation 7...dxc4 8.bxc4 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘xd4 10.♗xb7 ♖b8 11.♗d5 e5 didn't suit Pillsbury, although to us it seems that Black would obtain a good game.

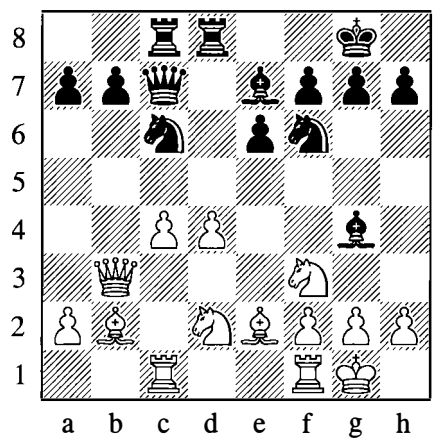
8.0–0 dxc4

A critical decision. White is given hanging pawns, with all the advantages and disadvantages of a hanging central phalanx. Black's decision may have been prompted by a reluctance to allow c4-c5 with the subsequent attack by White's pawn mass on the queenside.

9.bxc4 ♖c8 10.♗b2 ♗e7 11.♘bd2 0–0

With this, the opening stage is concluded. White's plan should consist of preparing to advance his hanging phalanx, specifically with d4-d5. To that end, he first of all needs to bring his rooks to the centre with ♖ac1 and ♖fd1. Pillsbury opposes this with a plan of attack on the kingside, in conjunction with pressure against his opponent's hanging centre.

12.♕b3 ♕c7 13.♖ac1 ♖fd8



14.♕e3

At least five things can be urged in favour of this move. White defends his bishop on e2 and thus unpins the knight on f3; he increases the pressure on the central point e5; he over-protects the d4-pawn; he forestalls a sortie with ...♕f4; and finally, he removes his queen from the threat of ...♘a5. Nevertheless the queen move deserves censure, principally because it forms no link in implementing the plan to exploit the positive points of the hanging centre – as outlined in our previous note.

For the purpose of carrying out d4-d5!, White needed to play 14.♖fd1 and afterwards undertake the manoeuvre ♘d2-f1-e3. In any event, his task lay in keeping his opponent under the threat of a pawn advance and thus increasing the pressure in the centre as far as he could.

14...♗d6

Furthermore, the queen on e3 turns out to be rather awkwardly placed. To avert the threat of ...♗f4, White has to weaken the pawn cover of his castled position.

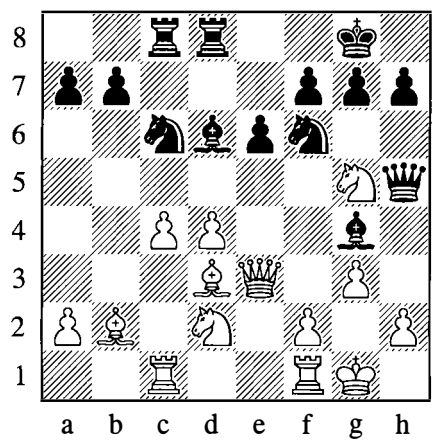
15.g3 ♕a5 16.♗d3

A "trappy" move, reckoning on 16...♕xa2? 17.♗c3. True, White is now threatening to break through with 17.d5 exd5 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♕h6, but Black parries this threat to his own advantage.

It might have made sense to carry out the operation at once: 16.d5 exd5 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♕h6, and now 18...♗e7? fails to 19.♗d3. However, after 18...♗f5 19.♕xf6 ♗g6 Black retains good chances: his two strong bishops securely defend his king, and he has the superior position in the centre.

16...♕h5 17.♘g5?

And this is an outright error. White doesn't sense the dangers hanging over him. He should have withdrawn his bishop to e2, with ♖fd1 to follow.



17...e5!

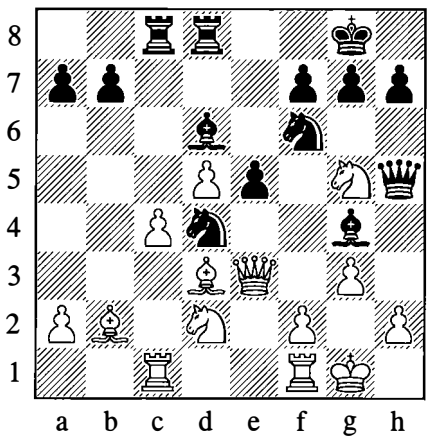
This unexpected blow in the centre was only made possible by White's last move. The goal of Black's attack is to conquer the f3-square.

18.d5

A wholly bad line for White is 18.dxe5 ♗c5! 19.♕xc5 ♖xd3 20.exf6 ♖xd2, when Black's various threats (such as ...♘d4) are decisive.

18...♘d4

Black has allowed the enemy centre pawn to advance, but this is more than compensated by his own invasion of the f3-point and also by the prospect of setting up and advancing his e-f phalanx.



19.h4

There is nothing better.

White would lose a knight with 19.♗xd4 exd4, or the exchange with 19.♘ge4 ♘xe4 20.♕xe4 ♗f5 21.♕e3 ♗xd3 22.♕xd3 ♘e2†.

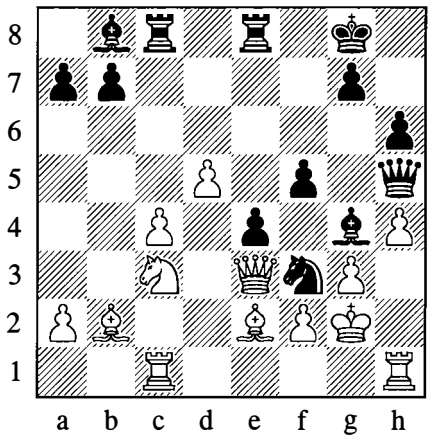
Nor is 19.f3 satisfactory, in view of 19...♗c5!.

19...h6 20.♘ge4 ♘xe4 21.♘xe4 ♘f3† 22.♔g2 ♗b8 23.♖h1

Aiming for ♗e2, which at this point would fail to 23...♘xh4†. However, the tempo expended enables Black to activate his phalanx.

The immediate 23.♘c3 was relatively best, though Black could still play 23...f5 and the phalanx attack would still be threatened.

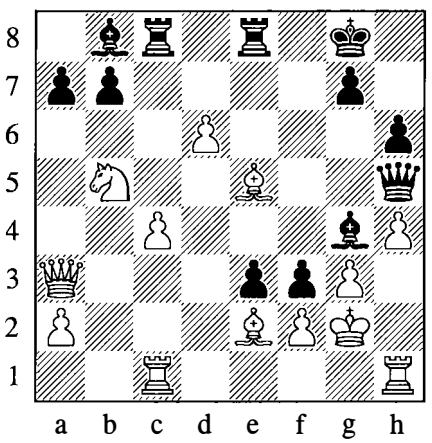
23...f5 24.♘c3 e4 25.♗e2 ♖e8



The phalanx will presently press on further, bringing "death and destruction" in its wake. White takes steps to work up some action in the centre and even manages to advance his d-pawn, but all this proves inadequate to stem Black's ferocious attack on the king.

26.♘b5 f4 27.♕a3 e3! 28.d6 ♘e5 29.♗xe5 f3†

The culmination of the breakthrough.



30.♔h2 ♖xe5

Perhaps 30...♕xe5 was even more energetic; Black would meet 31.d7 with 31...exf2!.

31.♗d3 ♗d7 32.fxe3 ♕g4

Threatening mate in two. The f-pawn has been converted into a "nail" which completes the rout.

33.♗f1 ♖h5

Again, mates are threatened – by ...♖xh4†.

34.♖c2

White cannot avoid losing a piece. 34.♕b2 can be answered with 34...♗xb5 35.♗h3 ♖xh4 36.gxh4 ♗xd6†.

34...♖xb5 35.♖d2 ♖e5 36.♕b2 ♖xe3 37.♕xb7 ♗c6 38.♕b2 f2
0–1

Usually the phalanx will breach the front, and the pieces will only afterwards throw themselves into the attack. In this game it happened the other way round. The attack was started by the pieces, but then they needed help from the pawn phalanx.

An attack with a pawn mass on the flank is picturesquely called a pawn storm, and indeed it justifies that name, as the struggle unfolds swiftly, forcibly and with great intensity. Sometimes when the kings castle on opposite sides, pawn storms will be launched by both players, and success will usually go to the first one to reach his opponent's shelter of pawns and start shattering his king position. A pawn storm also quite often takes place when the players have castled on the same side or not castled at all. In such cases the attacker needs to give careful attention to the safety of his own king which he has voluntarily exposed, and prevent his opponent from complicating the fight with counter-strokes.

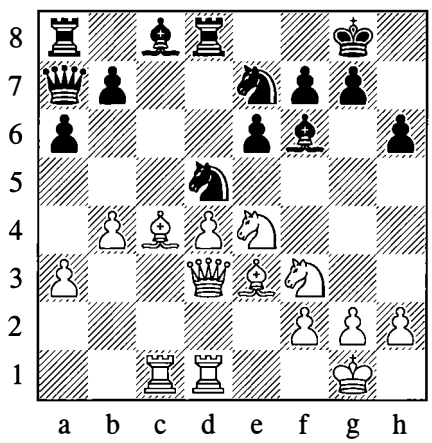
The assault formation of a pawn storm usually consists of three pawns advancing together on the f-g-h (or a-b-c) files. Sometimes two pawns will make up the formation. The attack has more chance of success if the g- and h-pawns in the opponent's castled position have stepped forward. The assault formation makes contact with these pawns one or two tempos earlier than if they were on their starting squares, so that the general pace of the attack is noticeably quickened.

The pawn storm requires to be carefully calculated, but this is far from an easy task. In most cases the onslaught involves a certain element of risk. Even when the assault formation has reached its goal and come into contact with the enemy pawns, the attacker must try to gauge the character of the battle with pieces that will develop once the pawns have vanished from the arena. It must not be forgotten that when a pawn group moves forward, this creates various positional weaknesses in its rear, and if the assault should fail, the player may suddenly find himself stranded.

Let us proceed to some illustrations.

M. Vidmar – S. Tarrasch

Nuremberg 1906



In this position White launches a pawn storm on the kingside. The grounds for this are the weakening of Black's castled position due to the move ...h6, and the constricted situation of the bishop on f6. In the centre Black can undertake nothing, which makes it safe for White to attack on the flank.

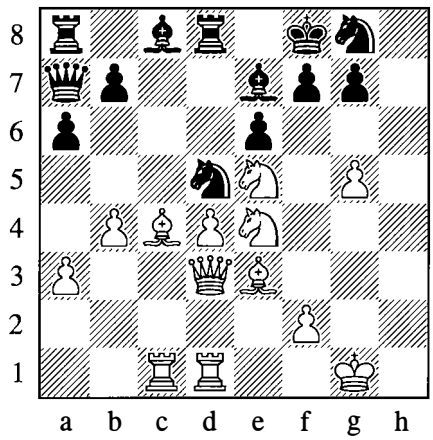
18.g4 ♔f8

There was no adequate defence in 18...♘xe3 19.♕xe3, when White threatens ♘xf6† followed by ♕xh6. If 19...♔h7, then 20.h4 or 20.♗d3 ♘g6 21.h4.

19.h4 ♘g8 20.g5

If the black pawn were still on h7, this move would not have the force that it acquires now.

20...hxg5 21.hxg5 ♗e7 22.♘e5



The pawn storm has borne fruit. Black's king position has noticeably deteriorated; his knight has been thrown back to g8 and doesn't have a single move; and the points f7 and g7 are weak. White's pieces, by contrast, are active; the opened h-file can be occupied without difficulty; and specific plans for exploiting the positional advantage are taking shape – for example ♗d2, followed by ♕f3.

22...f6

After 22...g6 23.♗d2, the threat of ♕f3 cannot be parried.

23.♘g6† ♔f7 24.♘h8† ♔e8 25.♘c5 f5 26.♕e2 g6 27.♘xg6

And Black soon resigned.

...1–0

Now let us examine some complete games. What characterizes the first of them is that White begins his kingside pawn storm even before Black has castled, almost in the very opening stage. In this case the purpose of the pawn storm, aside from the principal one of opening up the king's position, is precisely to stop Black from castling short. Placing his king opposite the frontal assault of the hostile infantry would, of course, be madness on Black's part.

A. Alekhine – J. Breyer

Vienna Game
Mannheim 1914

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗e7 4.d4 d6 5.♘c3 ♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3

The purpose of this exchanging operation, in conjunction with Black's next move, is to compel White to close the centre. He is indeed obliged to "lock" the centre forthwith and set about enlivening the situation on the flanks.

7.♕xf3 ♘f6 8.d5 ♘b8

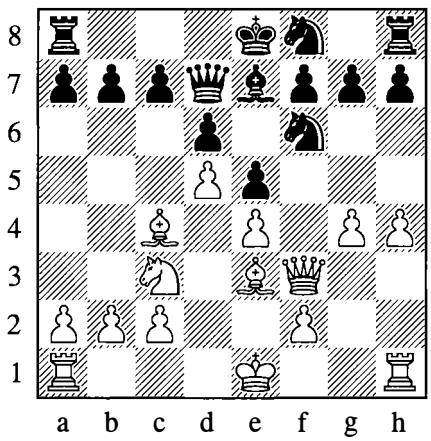
Understandably avoiding 8...♘d4 9.♕d3 followed by ♗e3, when the knight must already retreat but has nowhere to go!

9.♗e3 ♘bd7 10.g4

As we shall see from what follows, this thrust is the prelude to a general kingside pawn storm.

10...♘f8 11.h4 ♕d7

A dubious move. Black will now be very cramped, and the knight on f6 will have to head back to g8 – where it will imprison the rook as well as being imprisoned itself. He should have played 11...♘6d7, preparing to launch a pawn storm on the queenside if White should castle long.



12.♗b5 c6 13.♗e2 ♗d8

Seeking some scope for his pieces.

A more unpleasant reply from White's point of view would be 13...a6, threatening ...c5 and the further galvanization of the queenside pawns. If White replies 14.g5 ♘g8 15.♘a4, then 15...♗d8 *is* a good move, retaining the option of ...c5 and perhaps also ...b5.

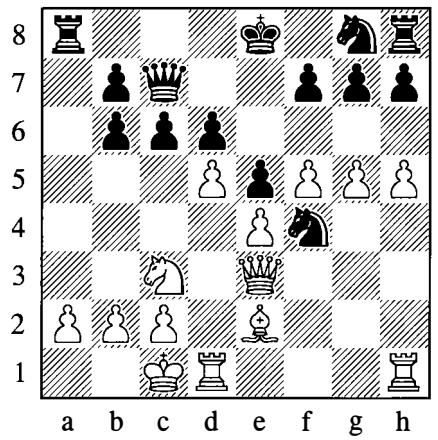
14.g5 ♘g8 15.0–0–0 ♗b6 16.♗xb6

Intent on his pawn storm, White goes in for an exchange after which he succeeds in forcing f2-f4 and adding his f-pawn to the assault formation consisting of the h- and g-pawns. The exchange does, however, have a minus side – it leads to a serious weakening of the f4-square, which Black afterwards skilfully exploits.

An energetic continuation of the attack would have been 16.♗c4, threatening 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♖xd6. In the event of 16...f6, White's light-squared bishop would obtain a convenient field of action with ♗c4-f1-h3 – quite apart

from the possibility of winning a pawn by 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♗xg8 ♖xg8 19.gxf6.

16...axb6 17.♕e3 ♕c7 18.f4 ♘g6 19.f5 ♘f4 20.h5



The assault is in full swing, but Black has managed to transfer one of his idle knights to the weak point f4; moreover, queenside castling – which means removing his king from the attack zone – is in prospect. As yet there is no need to despair!

20...h6

A sharp and risky attempt at meeting White's assault group on the approaches to the king's position. A pawn battle now immediately flares up. The position is so complex and unconventional that any clear plan of defence for Black is difficult to suggest.

A possibility is 20...♘xe2† 21.♕xe2 0–0–0 22.♖h3 ♔b8 23.♕c4 (if 23.♖hd3, then 23...♘e7 followed by ...♘c8, and the points b6 and d6 are securely defended) 23...h6 24.dxc6 bxc6 25.gxh6 ♖xh6, etc. White preserves attacking chances by following with a2-a4 and b2-b4, but Black still remains with considerable potential for resistance. Breyer has evidently decided to hold on tightly to his cavalry outpost. There is sense in this too, of course.

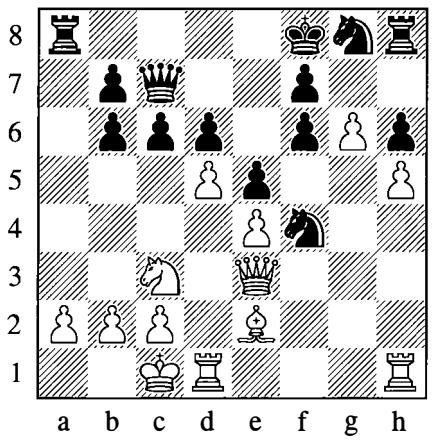
21.f6 gxf6 22.g6 ♔f8?

Aside from the fact that this move is an outright error (though White fails to take advantage of it), a king march into the assault zone, however courageous, can have nothing to justify it. Foolhardy is the word!

Black couldn't capture twice with 22...fxg6 23.hxg6 ♘xg6, in view of the pinning move 24.♗h5.

Castling is also bad: 22...0–0–0 23.gxf7 ♘xe2† 24.♘xe2 ♘e7 25.♖hf1 f5 26.dxc6 bxc6 27.♕b3 and Black is in trouble

However, by continuing 22...fxg6 23.hxg6 and only now 23...0–0–0, Black with his extra pawn would be entitled to face the future with confidence. At any rate, there would still be a tough struggle ahead.



23.gxf7

Engrossed in his plan of stripping the enemy king's position, White fails to notice a new possibility that has suddenly cropped up – he can win at least a knight with 23.g7†! ♔xg7 24.♖hg1†. The knight has to block the check, seeing that 24...♔f8 (or 24...♔h7) leads to even more lamentable results after 25.♕g3.

Now Black's spirits revive, and the struggle once again takes on quite a fierce character.

23...♘e7 24.♗g4 cxd5 25.exd5 f5 26.♗f3 ♕c5 27.♕e1 ♔xf7?!

So Black remains with an extra pawn, his pieces have taken up good positions on the queenside, and he has the a- and c-files on which to operate. Everything would be fine, if only he could ensure the safety of his king; but this is just where his difficult problem lies. White's plan of attack consists of sacrificing the exchange on f4 and invading on the e-file.

Instead of spending time taking the f7-pawn, Black should have immediately advanced 27...b5!, after which White's situation becomes critical; faced with the threat of ...b4, he has no time to organize counterplay.

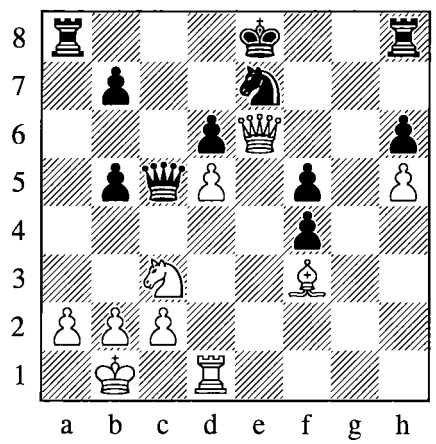
28.♖h4 ♔e8 29.♔b1

So that after 30.♖xf4 exf4 there will be no threat of a queen exchange (...♕e3†).

29...b5

Black could have played 29...♖h7 or 29...♖g8 (so that after 30.♖xf4 exf4 31.♕e6 he would have 31...♖g1 available). It was also worth considering 29...♖c8.

30.♖xf4 exf4 31.♕e6



31...♔d8

Some interesting variations would arise after 31...♖c8 32.♗e2, and now 32...b4 33.♗b5† ♔f8 34.♕f6† ♔g8 35.♗d7 and wins; or 32...♖c7 33.♗xb5† ♔d8 34.♖f1 with a clear advantage to White.

Black should probably opt for 31...♕e3, when play may continue: 32.♕xd6 ♖d8 (32...♕xf3? 33.♖e1) 33.♕c7 ♖d7 34.♕b8† ♖d8 35.♕c7 with a repetition of moves.

32.♘xb5! ♕xb5

By now Black is a rook up, but not for long.

33.♕xd6† ♕d7?

This is the decisive mistake.

Black should be able to survive with 33...♔e8 34.♖e1 ♕d7 and now:

a) 35.♕g6† ♔d8 36.♕f6 ♖e8 37.d6 ♖a6!

b) 35.♕e5 ♖g8 36.d6 ♖a6! and White must avoid 37.dxe7? ♖e6!! and instead play 37.♖d1 with approximate equality.

34.♕f6 ♖h7 35.d6 ♔e8 36.♖e1 36...♖a6 37.♕g6† ♖f7 38.♗d5 ♖xd6 39.♕xf7† ♔d8 40.♕f8† ♕e8 41.♕xe8† ♔xe8 42.♗xb7

And White's pawns marched inexorably forward. Black resigned on the 51st move.

...1–0

G. Kasparian – G. Levenfish

Sicilian Defence
10th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1937

1.e4 c5 2.♘e2 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 ♗e7 8.0–0–0 0–0

Castling on opposite sides is characteristic of this line of the Sicilian Defence, and predetermines White's plan which involves implementing a kingside pawn storm.

One opinion, which is not unfounded, is that there is no hurry for Black to remove his king to the flank. In a number of games he castled after a preliminary 8...♘xd4 9.♕xd4. If White

then meets 9...0–0 with 10.f4, Black plays 10...♕a5. It is true that in that case White still has the prospect of a pawn attack against the king's position.

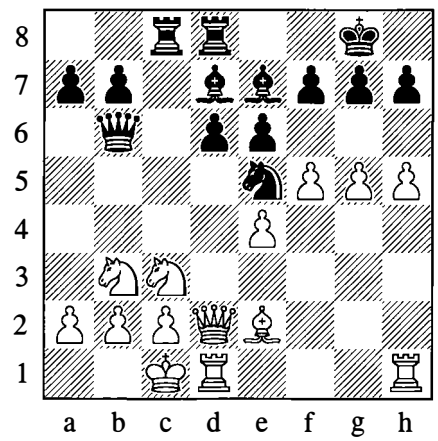
9.f4 ♕a5

White answers 9...h6 with 10.h4.

For the purpose of making it harder for White to organize his assault, it is worth considering 9...e5 – an idea introduced by Geller and tried out in a number of games, not unsuccessfully.

The move Black plays here is not entirely satisfactory. At any rate, if he plans to develop his queen in this way, he should exchange on d4 first.

10.♘b3 ♕b6 11.♗e2 ♖d8 12.g4 ♗d7 13.f5 ♘e5 14.h4 ♖ac8 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.g5 ♗e7 17.h5



A vivid picture of an assault in progress. Black is excellently mobilized, his knight is stationed in the middle of the board on a weak square, both his rooks are acting in the direction of the centre, one of them is on the open c-file that leads straight to the opposing king's refuge. And yet White is the one doing the attacking – with a three-pawn spearhead group; this is his sole positional plus, but a very serious one. In the next few moves his pawns will make contact with the Black king's shelter and carry out the necessary exchanges; then the army of white pieces, headed by the queen and rooks, will start operating with great force along the files where the breaches have been opened.

17...♗f8

Of course not 17...exf5 in view of 18.♘d5.

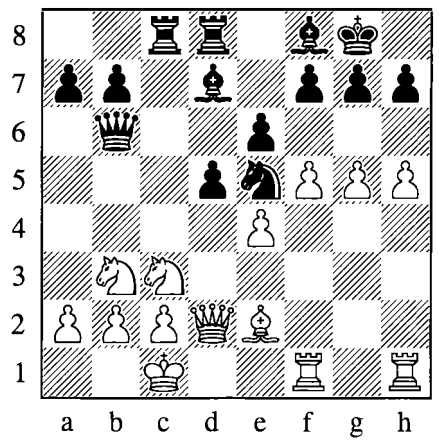
With that in mind, a standard exchange sacrifice deserves serious consideration: 17...♖xc3! 18.bxc3 exf5 19.exf5 ♗xf5

18.♖df1

In accordance with the general policy already described, the immediate 18.g6! would be better.

18...d5

The correct tactics! The best way to counter a flank attack is with an offensive in the centre.



19.g6

19.fxe6 is answered by 19...♗xe6, the idea being 20.exd5 ♗xd5! 21.♘xd5 ♕c6 and Black regains the piece (22.♖d1? ♖xd5!).

19...dxe4

Consistent – Black completely opens the centre, where all his pieces are in action. The variation 19...fxg6 20.hxg6 h6 21.♘xd5 exd5

22.♕xd5† ♗e6! 23.♕xe6† ♕xe6 24.fxe6 would resolve the crisis rather in White's favour (24...♘xg6 25.♖f7), though it would still be acceptable to Black.

20.gxh7† ♔h8

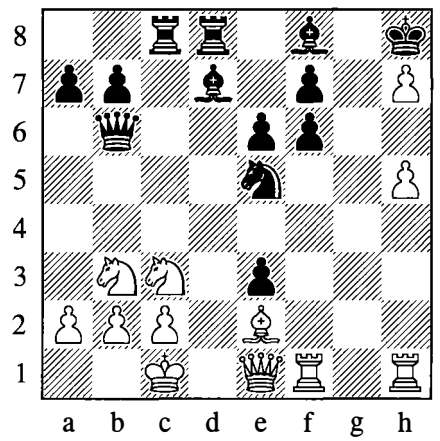
Black does better with 20...♔xh7 – by comparison with the variations in the note to move 23, he is gaining a tempo. With other continuations by White, the position also remains double-edged.

21.f6 e3 22.♕e1

Interposing 22.fxg7† ♗xg7 and then playing 23.♕e1 would be inferior owing to 23...f5!.

Now, however, White threatens to take on g7 and follow with h5-h6 and ♕h4. Black's reply is therefore forced.

22...gxf6



The assault has borne fruit – the black king's position has been opened up. The main artery for the attack with pieces is the g-file, and to some extent also the f-file. Although the time that White spent on the pawn storm was not wasted by Black (he has opened and seized the centre, and impaired the position of the enemy king), White's attack is nonetheless the more dangerous.

The tension has reached its height – the critical phase of the struggle begins.

23.♖xf6

A pardonable mistake! In the chaos of events, White fails to find the best continuation of the attack. Kasparian himself discovered it later, after subjecting this position to a thorough analysis.

White should have played 23.♖hg1. Some of the variations featuring in Kasparian's analysis are very pretty, for instance: 23...♔xh7 24.♕h4 ♗e7 25.♕e4† ♔h8 26.♕f4 ♔h7 27.♕xe5! fxe5 28.♖xf7† ♔h8 29.♗d3, or 23...f5 24.♕h4 ♘g4 25 ♖xg4! fxg4 26.♖xf7 ♗g7 27.♖xg7! ♔xg7 28.♕e7† ♔h6 29.♕f6† ♔xh5 (29...♔xh7 30.♕g6† ♔h8 31.♗d3) 30.♘e4 with the threats of ♘g3# and ♕g5#.

23...♗e7 24.♕f1 ♖f8

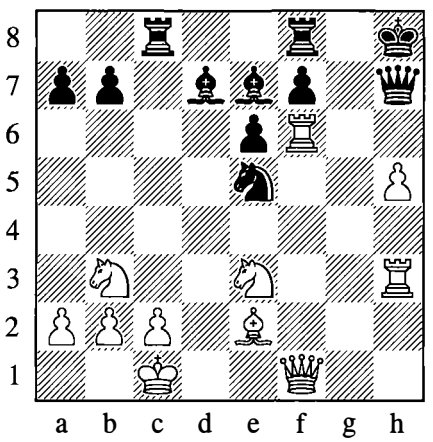
To prevent a sacrifice on f7.

25.♘d5

The correct continuation was: 25.♖g1 ♕d8! (to answer 26.♖h6 with 26...♗g5) 26.♖f4, with complex play.

25...♕c6 26.♘xe3 ♕e4 27.♖h3 ♕xh7

Now Black's king is securely protected, and several weaknesses in the White position are revealed – the consequence of the pawn storm that has turned out unsuccessfully.



28.h6 ♖g8 29.♗h5

White should have improved his king's position with 29.♔b1, after which there are chances for both sides.

The move played allows a tactical stroke which Black misses: 29...♗b5! 30.♕xb5 (The queen can't move along the f-file on account of the fork with ♘d3†.) 30...♗xf6

29...♖g5 30.♗d1

Once again White fails to remove his king from the danger zone and Black fails to spot 30...♗b5!, which would now be more effective still – since 31.♕xb5 would lose not just a rook, but the queen, to 31...♘d3†.

30...♖cg8 31.♕f4 ♗c6

With 31...♘d3†! 32.cxd3 e5 Black could proceed to the counterattack and obtain the advantage.

32.♖h4

White may have wanted to prevent ...♕e4, but 32.♘d2 was a better means to that end. The move selected by Kasparian leads to a quick dénouement.

32...♖8g6 33.♖f5?

He could have saved the exchange with 33.♖xg6 ♘xg6 34.♕b8†, although after 34...♕g8 Black has a big advantage in the ending.

33...♖xf5 34.♘xf5 ♗g5
0–1

To conclude, we will give a game illustrating the theme of a kingside pawn attack that begins from your own castled position and involves the advance f2-f4-f5 followed by g4, h4, g5 etc. (Or in this case as Black, ..f7-f5-f4, followed by ...g5, ...h5, ...g4 etc.) The idea for such a pawn storm belongs to Chigorin, who repeatedly carried it out in games starting with his opening system 1.e4 e6 2.♕e2 – for example the 4th game of his match with Tarrasch and some match games against Schiffers, among others.

S. Flohr – A. Vajda

King's Indian Defence
Budapest 1949

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3 ♘bd7 4.e4 e5 5.♘f3 g6 6.♗e2 ♗g7 7.0–0 0–0 8.d5

The wedge formation predetermines the whole character of the coming struggle, which is due to unfold on opposite wings. Black envisages playing ...f5 and proceeding from there to develop a frontal attack with his pawns; White prepares to attack the queenside.

8...♘c5 9.♘d2 a5 10.♕c2 ♗g4 11.♘b3 ♗xe2 12.♕xe2

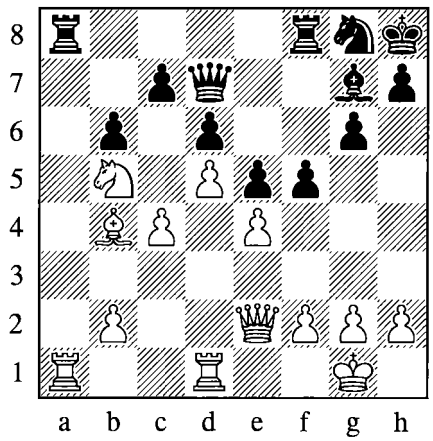
This bishop exchange favours White, since his wedge dominates the light squares. The absence of a light-squared bishop on his opponent's side not only accentuates this dominance, it also makes it harder for Black to carry out his pawn storm – given that the light square g4 will form, so to speak, the crucial high ground of the position under assault.

12...♘xb3

Black ought of course to put up some fight for the c5-square. A good move in accordance with his plan, preparing ...f5 and impeding White's queenside activity, was 12...♘fd7.

13.axb3 ♕d7 14.♖d1 b6 15.♗d2 ♔h8 16.♘b5 ♘g8 17.b4 axb4 18.♗xb4 f5

So Black has begun his attack, but White too has obtained a dangerous initiative on the other wing.



19.f3 ♘f6 20.♗d2 f4

The die is cast. In the wake of this pawn, the h- and g-pawns will inevitably be set in motion.

21.♕f1!

This modest retreat of the queen on one wing ensures control of the open file on the other.

21...g5

Just as we should expect!

22.♖xa8 ♖xa8 23.♖a1 ♖xa1 24.♕xa1 ♕c8

The white queen must be kept out of a8. For example, 24...g4 would be met by 25.♕a8† ♘e8? (25...♕e8 26.♘xc7) 26.♘xc7 and wins.

25.♕a7 ♘e8 26.b4 ♗f8

Seemingly preventing the dangerous break with c4-c5.

27.♗c3

An unsuccessful attempt to renew the threat (c4-c5) which Black now prevents once and for all – by making a move that is very useful to him anyway.

And yet, 27.c5 needed no preparation at all. Let us see what would follow from it: 27...dxc5 28.♕a1! ♕d7! (28...♗d6 29.bxc5 ♗xc5† 30.♔f1 ♗d6 31.♗c3 and White wins the e5-pawn and gains a clear positional advantage.) 29.♘a7 cxb4 30.♘c6 White has fine compensation for the two pawns.

Once White has missed this opportunity, he proves to be no longer capable of strengthening his position on the queenside – while his opponent's kingside pawns proudly assert themselves again after the enforced pause.

27...♕d7! 28.♗e1

White ought to think about neutralizing the pawns' menacing onslaught; to this end, 28.g4 could be played. Then in the event of 28...fxg3 29.hxg3 ♕h3 30.♗e1 g4 31.♕a3, it is hard to say who has the advantage. On each side there are weaknesses in the position. For Black, this means above all the c7-point; for White, it means e4 (after the f3-pawn is exchanged).

28...♔g8 29.h3

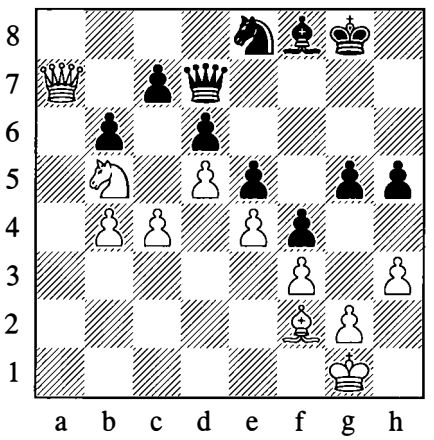
Or 29.♗f2 g4 30.♗xb6 gxf3, and White can't recapture on f3 because of 31...♕g7† and then ...cxb6.

29...h5

The assault is well underway; Black can't be prevented from crossing the frontier with ...g4.

30.♗f2

Threatening ♗xb6.



30...g4!

This storming move turns out to be playable, and highly unpleasant for White.

31.hxg4

If now 31.♗xb6, then 31...gxf3 32.♘xc7 ♕g7 33.g4 ♘xc7 34.♕xc7 ♕g6, and the white king looks dangerously exposed, but even then there is no clear-cut win after 35.♕d8! hxg4 36.h4.

31...hxg4 32.♔f1

White could play 32.♗xb6 anyway, and answer 32...gxf3 with 33.♗a5!, giving his queen access to f2. Black would retain the better chances though, for instance with 33...fxg2 34.♕f2 ♗e7 35.♕xg2† ♔f7. The white bishop is misplaced on a5, while Black threatens to activate his game after ...♗e7-h4-g3.

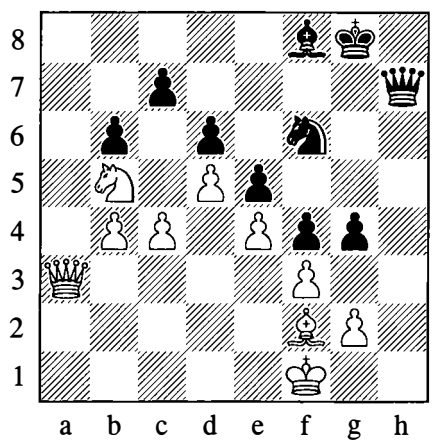
32...♕h7!

A very strong continuation of the attack! Black threatens ...♕h1†, and will also play this move (albeit without check) in answer to 33.♔e2.

33.♕a3!

The defence 33.♗g1 is inadequate. The continuation would be 33...gxf3 34.gxf3 ♕h1 35.♕a3 ♘f6, and if 36.♘xc7 then 36...♘h5! gives Black a winning attack.

33...♘f6



34.♔e2?

White could still have held on with 34.♕d3. For example: 34...gxf3 35.gxf3 ♕h1† 36.♔e2 ♘h5 37.♘xc7 ♘g3† 38.♔d2, or 34...♕h1† 35.♗g1 ♗e7 (35...gxf3 36.♕xf3 ♘h5 37.♕g4†) 36.fxg4 ♘xg4 37.♕h3! ♘e3† 38.♔e2 ♕xg1 39.♕e6† with perpetual check.

34...♕h1!

The tempting 34...♘xe4 would justify itself only if White accepted the sacrifice. The reply, however, would be 35.♕d3; then after 35...♘xf2 36.♕xh7† ♔xh7 37.♔xf2 g3† 38.♔e2 ♔g6 39.♘xc7 ♗e7 40.♘b5 ♔f5 41.♘c3 followed by ♘e4, White would probably even win.

35.fxg4 ♘xe4 36.♕h3 ♕b1

Threatening mate in three moves.

37.♗e1 ♕c2† 38.♔f1 ♕xc4† 39.♔g1 ♕xb5 40.♕h5 ♗g7 41.♕f5 ♕xd5
0–1

Once all three black pawns on the kingside had been set in motion, the defence became difficult for White.

With this we conclude our examination of the theme of the pawns as an attacking force. It remains to be noted that notwithstanding the immense amount of material presented in this chapter and partly in other sections of the book, the issue of the active role of the pawns can by no means be considered exhausted. We shall come across it again – in the final chapters of Part One, and especially in Part Two of this work, in which special attention will be given to the pawns' combinative role.

Chapter 6

Battle of the Major Pieces

In the Introduction we already pointed to the very substantial difference between the middlegame and endgame phases. The transition to an endgame considerably affects a player's aims, and hence also the planning of the struggle and the methods of action. It is very important to note that in the endgame the evaluation of weak and strong points changes, as does the significance of open lines. The role of theory and technique increases. Special demands arise for handling the pawn material.

With this in mind, one question is inevitable: in the middlegame, to what extent must a player be guided by considerations relating to the possible transition to an endgame? A game of chess, after all, is a unified whole, and despite the vital distinction between the positional demands of the middlegame and those of the endgame, it must never be forgotten that in many cases even the sharpest and most intense middlegame struggle does not reach a conclusion until well into the endgame stage.

In a general form, the question can be answered as follows: taking into account the possibilities for a later endgame, you must not exaggerate their role, let alone accord them decisive importance in solving the creative tasks of the middlegame and even those of some openings.

It is no good, let us say, impairing your pawn formation for nothing, since this may have adverse consequences in the endgame. But if a concrete plan of action conceived in the middlegame requires the creation of backward, isolated, doubled or even tripled pawns in your own camp, then you must of course go in for it, putting aside any abstract considerations that are valid with regard to the endgame only.

It is well known for instance that when Lasker, with White, opted for the Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6), he was planning, after 4...dxc6, to make use of his extra kingside pawn in the endgame. He successfully implemented such a plan in match games with Janowski and Tarrasch. This did not stop him from mating Chigorin in a game with the same variation (at the 1904 Cambridge Springs international tournament) before the endgame stage was reached. An even more striking example is the game Lasker – Capablanca, St Petersburg 1914. Capablanca too was defending the Exchange Variation; being familiar with Lasker's plan of playing for the endgame, he blocked the e-pawn and conceived an attack on it with his rooks on the half-open file, supported from b7 by his bishop. Battle was joined in a middlegame in which Lasker didn't shrink from pushing with f4-f5, leaving his e4-pawn backward and weak. At the decisive moment of the struggle he sacrificed this pawn, penetrated to the sixth rank with his knights and the seventh with his rooks, and crushed his dangerous opponent outright. In devising the idea for this attack, Lasker evaluated its prospects subtly and profoundly, disregarding thoughts about a possible endgame.

In short, if the positional requirements of the middlegame and the endgame can be combined – so much the better. But if they conflict, those of the middlegame should be given precedence.

All these issues become especially acute in positions where (apart from the pawns, of course) each side has only a queen and rook taking part in the fight. The peculiarity of such middlegame positions is that the exchange of one pair of pieces will bring about an endgame – a queen ending or a rook ending. Here, a regard for the endgame scenario becomes one of the most important factors in a player's judgements.

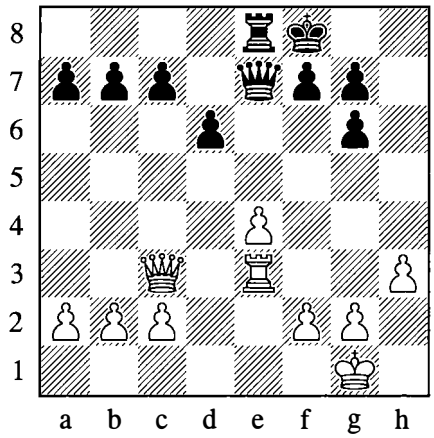
An opinion to have been stated in chess literature is that positions where the material is confined to the major pieces must be treated like an endgame. This is profoundly mistaken.

The characteristic feature of the endgame stage is that the king plays a full part in the struggle. The king in the endgame is an active piece, by which the outcome of the battle is often decided. Yet with queens and rooks on the board, the kings are obliged to shelter behind their screen of pawns; neglect of this rule, under the false supposition that an endgame struggle is taking place, can have – and sometimes *has* had – a most lamentable result. At the same time, the kings must be ready to plunge into the fray as soon as a queen exchange brings about a rook endgame. Moreover a good deal of attention has to be given to the pawn configuration, to make sure it is as suited to the endgame phase as possible. The presence of a passed pawn is of special significance; such an advantage often becomes decisive. The passed pawn's advance must of course be halted, and in these conditions the king is unsuited to the role of blockader; but squandering the energy of the queen or rook on blocking the pawn means granting the opponent a preponderance of force in the other sectors of the battlefield.

The peculiarities of the struggle in this distinctive stage of the middlegame form the material of the present chapter.

C. Schlechter – Em. Lasker

World Championship (5), Vienna/Berlin 1910



Can we assert that either side has an advantage? Of course not. Plenty of players, indeed, would agree to shake hands and depart in peace.

The position is on the boundary of the endgame, yet this is a boundary which will not be crossed during a long sequence of moves.

22.♕b4 c6 23.♕a3 a6

Losing a pawn in such positions is tantamount to losing the game, whereas the weakening of the b6-square plays no significant role.

24.♕b3 ♖d8 25.c4

White isn't afraid of weakening d4, which might have been dangerous if minor pieces had been taking part in the fight. All the same, in endgame positions the pawn would be better left on c2. The weakness of Black's d6-pawn is only imaginary.

25...♖d7 26.♕d1 ♕e5 27.♕g4 ♔e8

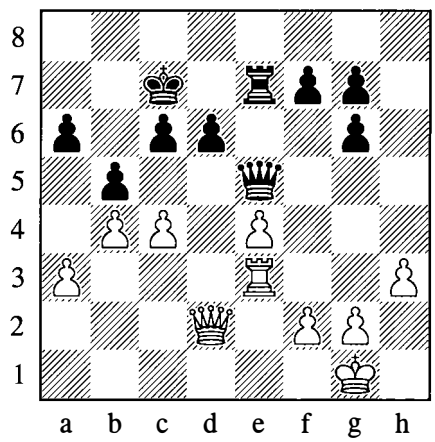
Carefully, using the lines of communication in the rear of his position, Lasker brings his king closer to the centre and the queenside. For the endgame, of course, the king is best placed in proximity to the main group of pawns,

which is the only area where an offensive can be launched. Accordingly Black starts executing a plan to bring the game alive on the queen's wing. At the same time he solves one individual problem by entrusting the defence of the d6-pawn to the king and thereby freeing the queen from that role. Of course on g8 or f8 the king would be safer than on c7, but on the latter square it will still be hard for White to get at it; there are few pieces on the board, and Black's queenside pawn chain is solid enough.

28.♕e2 ♔d8 29.♕d2 ♔c7 30.a3 ♖e7 31.b4

White instigates something in the nature of a pawn storm, with a view to creating some threats against the black king. Passive play is not to Lasker's taste, and he boldly accepts the challenge.

31...b5!



Perhaps a risky thrust, but an enterprising one that sets White some serious problems. Black is aiming for a position in which a queen exchange will be to his advantage. Since White has to avoid an endgame, Black acquires greater freedom of action. The minus side of this move is a certain weakening of the pawn shelter round the king. The endgame is still a long way off, and the question is whether Black will manage to reach it.

32.cxb5

Schlechter evidently intends to show his mighty opponent that the conditions of the middlegame still apply. White too needs to be careful, however. Considering the weakness of the a3-pawn and the possibility of a break with ...c5, a rook endgame would be wholly unacceptable to him.

The natural continuation 32.♕d3, which at first sight looks best, can be adequately met by 32...♕a1† 33.♔h2 ♕a2. If now 34.c5?! dxc5 35.bxc5 ♖d7 36.♕c3 ♕d2! 37.♕e5† ♔b7, then the extra pawn on the queenside, together with control of the d-file, would give Black realistic winning chances. Instead, White can force a draw, if he wants one, by 34.♕d4 followed by invading on a7.

32...axb5 33.g3

Aiming to avoid variations like the one in the last note, and also to provide the king with a station nearer to the action. Now, however, the h3-pawn is weakened. It's interesting that Schlechter should decide on this in spite of being a brilliant representative of the Vienna school of players, in whose games the exploitation of positional weaknesses attained meticulous perfection.

33...g5 34.♔g2 ♖e8

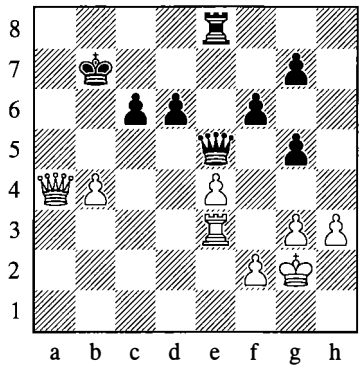
The rook can now be thrown into play on either wing at the shortest notice. Among other things, a demonstration against the h3-pawn is being prepared. The position is becoming noticeably sharper.

35.♕d1!

White too makes excellent use of his chances. He prepares a3-a4, which will make the situation of the black king still more uneasy. Pursuing the same end with 35.♕a2 would be worse in view of 35...♕e6.

35...f6!

A subtle reply to White's threat. Black can mow meet 36.a4 with: 36...bxa4 37.♕xa4 ♔b7



38.♖a3? ♕xe4† 39.♔h2 ♕d4! 40.♕a6† ♔c7 41.♕a7† ♕xa7 42.♖xa7† ♔b6 Lasker's move is now understandable: the f-pawn has been removed from attack. After 43.♖xg7 ♖e4, Black should win the endgame.

36.♕b3

Schlechter doesn't get caught in the delicately woven net; he realizes that his chances can lie only in the middlegame.

36...♕e6 37.♕d1

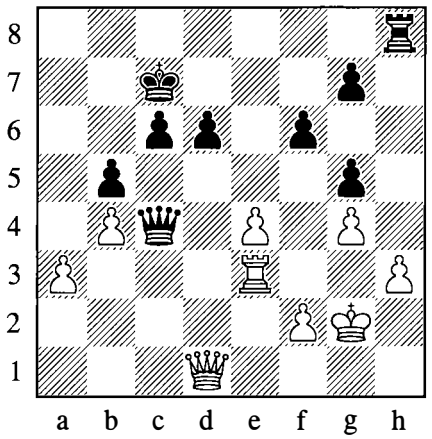
It appears that Schlechter is deliberately provoking his opponent into the whole line of play that now follows, in which he counts on seizing a suitable opportunity for a3-a4.

37...♖h8 38.g4

Refraining from 38.♕g4, White consents to a new weakening of his position – and he is perfectly right. Anything but an endgame!

38...♕c4

An impetuous queen sally. Black definitely ought to have played 38...♖a8, so that White's main and perhaps only chance, consisting of the advance of the a-pawn, would be nipped in the bud. Perhaps Lasker didn't see any clear ways of improving his position further, and he in turn had decided to provoke Schlechter into the following bayonet attack, trusting in the fact that this would involve material sacrifices.



39.a4!?

White might never get another chance. Black will soon realize that his exposed king is not all that easy to defend, even against such a relatively small quantity of attacking forces.

[Editor's note: "A sounder option was 39.♕d2, with a defensible position" – Kasparov]

39...♕xb4

Lasker hastens to make material gains, especially since there appears to be no immediate danger to his king.

39...♖a8 40.axb5 ♕xb5 can bet met by 41.♖c3 (intending 42.♕d5), and if 41...♕xb4 then 42.♖xc6† with equality.

The most unpleasant continuation from White's viewpoint is 39...♖b8! 40.axb5 ♖xb5, when the b-pawn is lost without sufficient compensation.

40.axb5 ♕xb5

So Black has picked up a pawn. What does White have in return? Does he in fact have anything? Undoubtedly he does. The pawn cover in front of the enemy king is even more

shaky than before. Files have been opened, pointing straight to the king's position. White is threatening to seize the initiative.

41.♖b3 ♕a6 42.♕d4

Aiming to play ♕b4 followed by ♖a3.

42...♖e8

Black brings his rook to the defence via e5.

43.♖b1

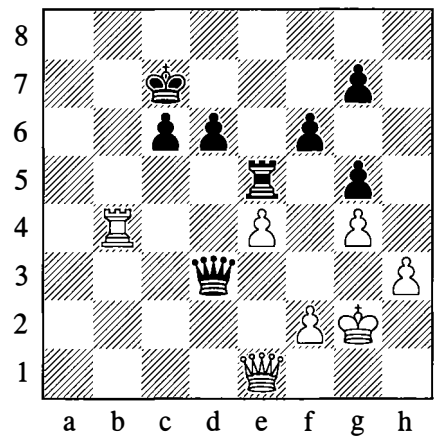
If 43.♕b4, then 43...c5.

43...♖e5 44.♕b4 ♕b5

44...♖b5 is met by 45.♕c4.

45.♕e1 ♕d3 46.♖b4

Not only defending, but also threatening the strong attacking move ♕a1. Substantial threats to the black king have now arisen.



46...c5

Black himself opens up his own king's position still further, obviously convinced that he has sound defensive resources and wishing to exploit his material plus without delay.

Annotators of this difficult game have considered the best defence to be 46...♖a5, threatening ...♖a3. However, the queen ending that results from 47.♖b3 ♕xb3 48.♕xa5† ♔b7 49.♕d8 ♕e6 50.f3 d5 51.exd5 cxd5 52.♕a5 ♕d7 53.♕b4† ♔c7 54.♕d4 is by no means simple, and it isn't clear whether Black can win it. Lasker wasn't convinced that he could, and since he was generally underestimating his opponent's chances, he decided he was entitled to something more.

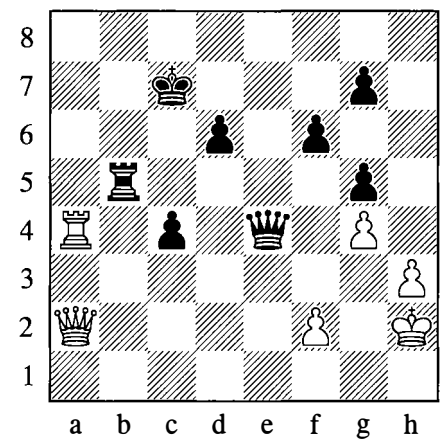
Instead 46...♖b5 would be countered by 47.♖a4. [Editor's note: "However, after 47...♔d7 White is at a loss for a good continuation" – Kasparov]

47.♖a4 c4

Who would not be tempted to add the e4-pawn to Black's gains here? The situation looks completely hopeless for White.

However, Black should have removed his king from the danger zone with 47...♔d7!.

48.♕a1 ♕xe4† 49.♔h2 ♖b5 50.♕a2



White is threatening both ♖xc4† and ♖a7† followed by ♖xg7. This ensures him at least a draw.

50...♕e5† 51.♔g1 ♕e1† 52.♔h2

Better 52.♔g2; White will later have to lose a tempo.

52...d5

The point of Black's checks was that after 53.♖a7† ♖b7 the white queen would not be able to check on a5. But the black king is now

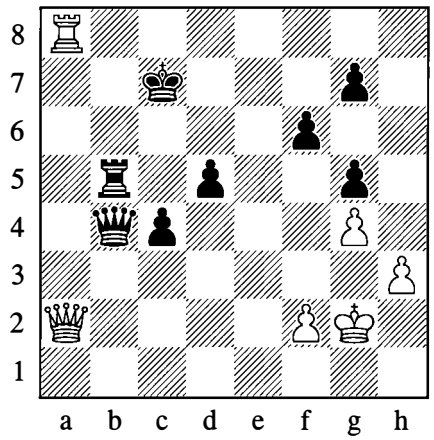
completely open, and this enables Schlechter to set his opponent new problems. Defending such a king position in the middlegame is a difficult task.

53.♖a8

Threatening ♕a7†.

53...♕b4 54.♔g2

If the king were on g2 already, White could play 54.♕a6, which at the moment is unplayable owing to 54...♕d6†.



54...♕c5?

The failure of his general offensive in the centre, fatigue from his opponent's never-ending threats – all this has evidently caused the error that Lasker commits. But then, his king has landed in such a dangerous situation that by this time a draw is the best way out of his predicament. To that end, he should have played 54...♖b7 or 54...♖b8.

55.♕a6 ♖b8?

There was similarly no salvation in 55...♖b7 56.♕e6.

By giving up his queen, Black could obtain good saving chances thanks to the c-pawn. He could play 55...c3, and now 56.♖c8† ♔d7 57.♖xc5 ♖xc5, or 56.♖a7† ♕xa7 57.♕xa7† ♔c6 (Lasker).

Alternatively, he could try 55...♕b6 56.♕c8† ♔d6 57.♖a6 ♕xa6 58.♕xa6† ♔c5 (Capablanca).

56.♖a7† ♔d8 57.♖xg7 ♕b6 58.♕a3 ♔c8

Or 58...♕b4 59.♕a7.

Having played this last move, Lasker resigned at once, not waiting to be mated after 59.♕f8† ♕d8 60.♕c5†.

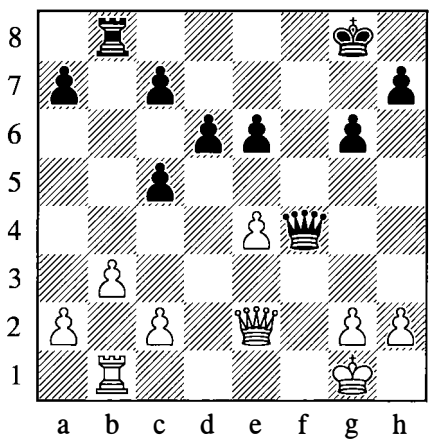
1–0

The whole of this ending serves as an instructive example of a player underrating the ideas of the middlegame in the struggle of the major pieces. Strictly speaking Lasker made only one mistake, but a cardinal one: he submitted too much to the dominance of endgame ideas.

In this last example, the peculiarities and difficulties associated with defence and attack in a major piece battle were quite plainly disclosed to us. They will be illustrated perhaps even more precisely in the finishes that we shall examine next – as will the characteristic mistakes made in such positions even by top-class masters.

Em. Lasker – H. Pillsbury

Hastings 1895



White's central pawn is isolated and weak, and his king is in need of protection. Black is a pawn up, and an exchange of either queens or rooks will facilitate the exploitation of his material plus in the ending. In short, Black has all the chances of winning. During the game, both players took this same view of the state of affairs.

True, an assessment of the position in dynamic terms indicates a certain weakness of the black pawns on a7 and c7, but White's need to defend his king and the e4-pawn makes it hard for him to utilize these defects of his opponent's pawn skeleton.

Let us see how the next events unfolded in this difficult position.

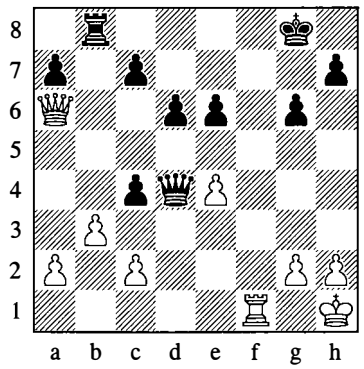
22.♖f1 ♕e5 23.♕a6!.

The wounded tiger pounces! This is reminiscent of Schlechter's "desperate" play in the preceding game. White has nothing to lose, and he courageously goes for the exchange of his centre pawn for Black's wing pawn.

Other players might have preferred 23.♕f3, but then there could follow 23...♕d4† 24.♔h1 ♕g7, threatening an exchange on the f-file.

23...♕d4† 24.♔h1 ♕xe4

Pillsbury underestimates his opponent's counter-chances based on the acquisition of a passed pawn on the rook's file. It is in the very nature of major piece play that the presence of such a pawn significantly broadens the possibilities for the side that possesses it. Here, for example, a queen ending becomes acceptable for White; in some cases he can even go into a rook ending, if Black doesn't succeed in blocking the passed pawn with his king in time. Pillsbury should therefore have preferred 24...c4.



Now either 25.♕xc4 ♕xc4 26.bxc4 ♖b2 or 25.bxc4 ♕f2! 26.♖g1 ♕b6 27.♕a4 ♖f8 28.♕d7 e5 would be in Black's favour.

He was evidently afraid of a different continuation, namely 25.♕c6. There could follow 25...♖f8! 26.♖xf8† ♔xf8 27.h3 cxb3 28.axb3 ♕c5 29.♕d7 ♕xc2, and now 30.♕xe6 ♕c1† 31.♔h2 ♕f4† 32.♔h1 ♕f7, or 30.♕xh7 ♕xe4 31.♕xc7 ♕e1† 32.♔h2 ♕e5† 33.♔h1 a5. It is true that in both cases the win would require a high degree of technique, but it would definitely be attainable.

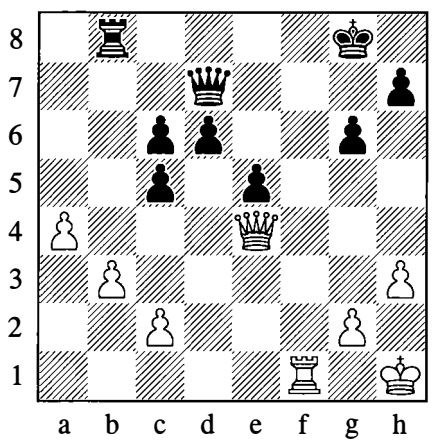
25.♕xa7 ♕b7 26.♕a4 c6

The white queen was threatening to invade on d7. The insufficiently secure position of Black's king is beginning to tell.

27.♕e4 ♕d7 28.a4

The significance of the extra pawn has noticeably diminished.

28...e5 29.h3



29...♖b4?

This move tells us that Pillsbury has not probed into the current situation deeply enough. By removing his rook from the back rank, he condemns his queen to the role of watching over the white passed pawn. And yet in the coming fight, the queen's energy will be essential to fulfil other tasks. Hence there is nothing surprising in the fact that, before long, Black will not only prove powerless to exploit his advantage – there will also be a real threat of defeat hanging over him.

The rook move has another dark side – it worsens the position of the black king, with which the rook is losing contact. In making his aggressive lunge, Pillsbury was obviously counting on galvanizing his passed e-pawn; he reckoned that by advancing it, he would nullify or at least reduce the offensive power of White's passed pawn on the a-file. It will very soon become clear, however, that this plan is mistaken and that in the present circumstances the a-pawn is more mobile and dangerous than the e-pawn.

Pillsbury's scheme proves insufficiently concrete; he has not been precise enough in charting the paths to his intended goal. Up until this last fateful move, he could still have cherished some small hopes of converting his material plus into a win. He needed to reinforce his e-pawn from behind, with 29...♖e8.

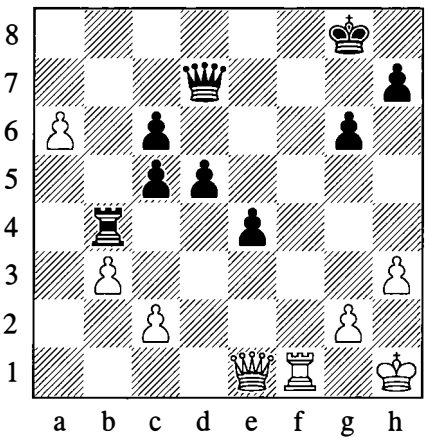
After 30.a5?! d5 31.♕e2 e4 32.♖a1 ♕g7! 33.♖a2 e3 34.a6 ♕e5 35.a7 ♖a8, the chances would still be with Black.

However, with 30.♕c4†! White could prevent a quick advance of the black centre pawns. In the rook ending after 30...♕e6, Black's chances of winning are minimal.

30.♕e1 e4

Even after making his mistake on the previous move, Pillsbury ought to have corrected it at once by returning his rook to b8. In his wish to be consistent, he will find himself sliding downhill. This is a noteworthy chess episode from the psychological viewpoint apart from anything else.

31.a5 d5 32.a6



32...♕e7?

White was threatening 33.♕f2, and if 33...♕e7 then 34.a7; in short, there are storm clouds looming over Black's position.

It was therefore imperative to play 32...♖b8, after which Black could still fight on, though only for the draw. That end could be attained as follows: 33.♕g3 ♖a8 34.♖a1 ♖a7! 35.♕b8† ♔g7, and White has nothing better than to force a draw with 36.♕e5† ♔g8 37.♕b8†, seeing that 37.♖f1 leads nowhere after 37...♕e7.

33.♕g3!

The winning move. White stops the black rook from returning to the back rank, and the a-pawn eventually crowns its victorious march.

33...e3 34.♖a1

After 34...e2 35.a7 the white passed pawn gets there sooner. The ill-starred rook on b4 has been excluded from the play.

On 34...♕a7 White simply takes the e3-pawn.

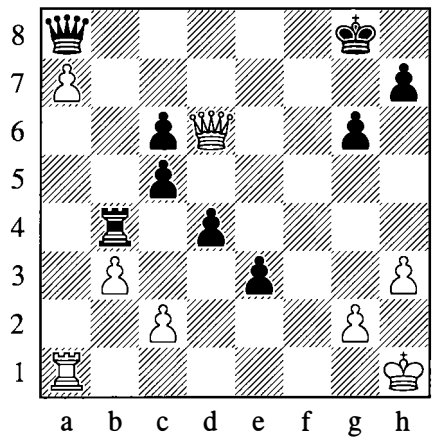
34...♕f6 35.♖e1

The rook must not leave the first rank: 35.♖a2? ♕f2! 36.♔h2 Other moves lose. 36...♕xg3† 37.♔xg3 ♖b8 and White's win is called into question.

35...d4

Or 35...♖e4 36.a7 ♖e8 37.♖xe3 ♖c8 38.♕b8 ♕f8 39.♕b7 ♕f1† 40.♔h2 ♕f4† 41.♖g3 ♕f8 42.♖f3 ♕e8 43.♖e3! and wins.

36.a7 ♕d8 37.♖a1 ♕a8 38.♕d6



38...♖b7

If 38...e2, then 39.♕e6†.

38...♖b5 is met by 39.♖f1!, quickly putting an end to the fight.

39.♕xc6 e2 40.♕xb7

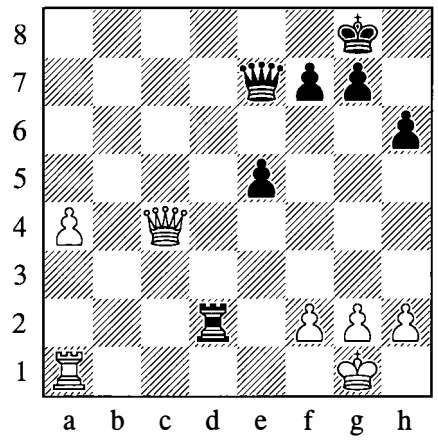
Black resigned, for on 40...e1=♕† White simply plays 41.♖xe1 ♕xb7 42.♖e8†.

1–0

The struggle took a very instructive course in the following game.

M. Euwe – A. Alekhine

World Championship (15), Netherlands 1937



White has a passed pawn, which moreover is defended from behind. This guarantees him an indisputable positional advantage in a rook or queen ending. However, with both queens and rooks on the board, the verdict on the position is influenced by a number of other factors. In the present case attention must be given, for example, to the strong position of the black rook on the second rank, where it is a good deal more actively placed than its white counterpart. The comparison between the king positions is also in Black's favour, in view of the ...h6 "loophole". In the centre, Black has a strong mobile pawn. White has a weak point on f2. In such a situation the white passed pawn on a4 can be transformed from a strength into a weakness – as the following sequence of events confirms.

27.a5

An "obvious" move, which White no doubt played in the firm conviction that his position was superior. In actual fact, with every step it takes forward, the passed pawn only becomes weaker, and it will soon become very hard to defend. White should have played 27.h3, so that his own king too would have a "loophole".

27...♕f6 28.♖f1

If 28.♕c5 then 28...e4 29.♖b1 ♖a2, and already the a-pawn is doomed.

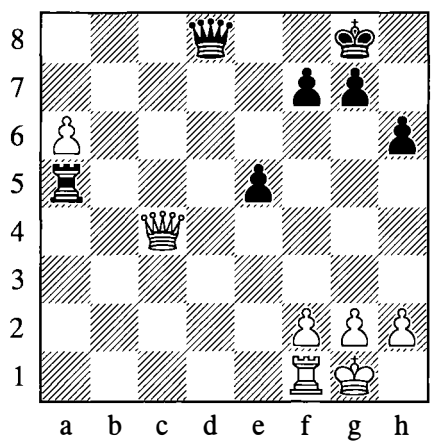
Similarly 28.♕f1 e4 29.a6 ♖xf2! offers White no winning chances, though after 30.♕e1 White's far advanced passed pawn obliges Black to force a draw. For example: 30...♖e2 31.♕f1 ♕b2 (or 31...♖f2=) 32.a7 ♖xg2† 33.♔h1 ♖xh2† 34.♔g1 ♖g2† with perpetual check.

28...♕d8 29.a6

White still supposes that the chances are on his side; otherwise he would have played 29.♖a1, to which the best reply is 29...♕f6, repeating the position.

29...♖d4 30.♕a2 ♖d5 31.♕c4 ♖a5

After two moves by White that were not the most effective, the black rook has taken up the ideal position behind the pawn.



32.♖b1

Now White loses his passed pawn without any compensation.

A sounder continuation was 32.♕c3, when the exchange of the a-pawn for the e-pawn is unavoidable.

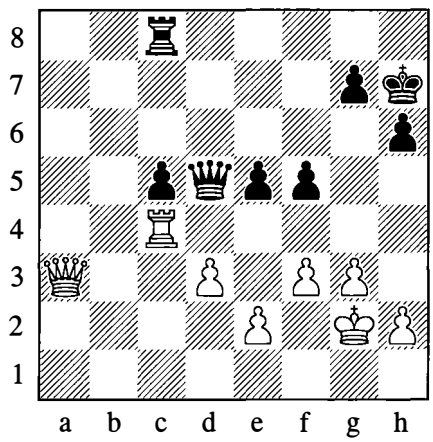
32...♕a8 33.♕c7 ♕xa6

The rest of the struggle lies outside the theme of this chapter. The game was finally drawn.
...½–½

The conclusion is clear: in a battle of major pieces, the conjunction of positional factors – especially with regard to the placing of the kings – may be such as to diminish the role of even a remote, well-defended and far-advanced passed pawn. Those who are inclined to regard such a struggle as an endgame process are deeply and hopelessly mistaken.

P. Romanovsky – G. Stahlberg

Moscow 1935



Notwithstanding the equal material and the relative simplicity of the situation, White has reason to think his position is preferable. His pawns are arranged more compactly; the black c5-pawn is isolated and forms an object of attack.

Nonetheless it must be acknowledged that White's winning chances are strictly minimal. He has no possibilities for strengthening the attack on the c-pawn; the quantity of forces in action on the board is very limited; his pawn on d3 cannot come to the support of his pieces, since the d4-square, from where it would come into contact with the c-pawn, is firmly shut off.

It would be in White's interest to force a rook endgame in order to mobilize his king, but this is quite difficult to achieve. In general terms the white king is worse placed than the black one, which is more safely shielded by pawns. For all that, the initiative is undoubtedly in White's hands. Black is condemned to passive defence and must carefully watch for any attempt on his opponent's part to go into action somewhere.

What ought White's plan to consist of? As a first stage, his main task must be to evict the hostile queen from its central post on d5 and to occupy c4 with his own queen, which will be much more actively placed there. In the process White must be prepared for a queen exchange. It is therefore essential for him to create the best possible conditions for the struggle in a rook endgame.

To that end, what detailed steps is White to take? He must first bring his king as near to the centre as possible, say to f2. Then once a rook endgame arises, he must prepare to advance with e2-e3 followed by d3-d4 with his rook stationed on the c-file. This will lead to the win of the pawn on c5, unless of course Black too has time to bring his king up to the centre.

From what has been said, it is clear that White's undertaking is far from simple and may be impossible of execution if Black defends well. In any event, what lies ahead is a sharp, tense struggle, full of varied and interesting ideas.

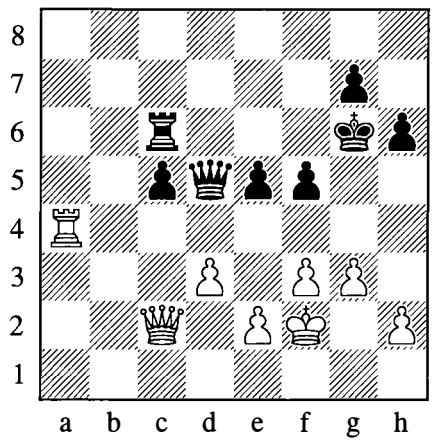
36.♕c3 ♖c6 37.♕c2 ♔h8 38.♔f2

The king approaching the centre indicates that White is seeking to go into an endgame. Should the queens be exchanged when his opponent's king is not ready to join in the skirmish in the centre, White will set up an attack on the c5-pawn by preparing d3-d4 with either f3-f4 or e2-e3. To some extent these threats are present even with queens on the board, but to carry them out in the middlegame means exposing White's own king position – entailing dangers which the example of the Schlechter – Lasker game has served to impress upon us.

It follows that Black must position his king in such a way that it can quickly come to the defence of the c-pawn if an endgame arises, but if attacked by the major pieces it can easily take cover on the flank. From this point of view the most suitable square would be f7, and Black ought now to have moved his king in that direction with 38...♔g8. In fact Stahlberg reasoned differently and, to judge from the subsequent events, less aptly.

38...♔h7 39.♖a4 ♔g6

Black could still play 39...♔g8, and in the event of 40.♕c4 ♕xc4 41.♖xc4 ♔f7 his king would reach the c5-pawn in time. The position of the king on g6 is not without danger, as White demonstrates with his very next move.



40.e4

With the black king on g6, this strike gains in strength. In carrying it out, White is pursuing three tasks. He is giving his opponent one more weakness – an isolated pawn on e5; he is establishing a convenient base for his pieces on e4, which can be utilized even by his king if an endgame should arise; and finally,

he is generally opening up the position in the centre, to strip away the enemy king's cover. But then again, the energetic thrust with the white e-pawn is sharpening the struggle in a mutual sense – it opens the position of White's own king, while the d3-pawn on the half-open file becomes backward.

40...fxe4 41.♖xe4 ♔f7

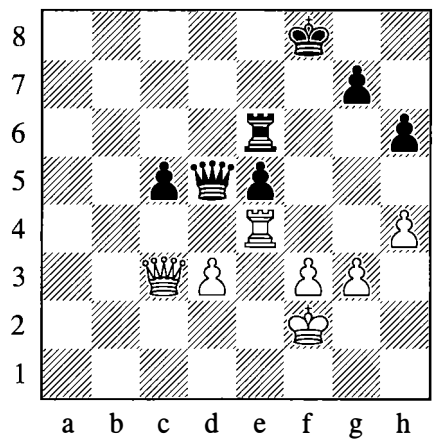
On 41...♔h7, White unexpectedly plays 42.♖xe5; even then, after 42...♕d4† 43.♔g2 ♖b6!? 44.♖e2 ♖d6, White would have a long way to go to win.

42.♕c3 ♖e6 43.h4

Little by little, White prepares for the endgame. The point of this move is that if the queens are exchanged and the black rook arrives on the second rank with check, White's h-pawn will not be under attack. For another thing, White wants to clarify where the black king is going to station itself. Going to f6 would not be good in view of the reply f3-f4, but withdrawing to f8 would mean removing the king further from the important central squares. Thus, the advance of the white h-pawn is in its way a useful waiting move.

43...♔f8

A more cautious move was 43...♖e7, to which White would have replied 44.h5, creating still better conditions for a future endgame.



44.♕c4

This offer to exchange was prompted by Black's last move. The less committal 44.h5 was also possible, postponing the crisis and aiming to keep the opponent psychologically under pressure for some time yet.

44...♕d6

It isn't so easy to say whether declining the exchange is the right decision. Black definitely has reason to base some calculations on the exposed position of the white king, but on the other hand he will have to endure the stress of a difficult defence, seeing that his own king position is also insecure.

If Black defends his queen with 44...♖d6, White would simply play 45.♔e3!. Then 45...♔e7 would be bad in view of 46.f4, as would 45...♔f7 on account of 46.♖xe5.

On 44...♕xc4, the game could continue as follows: 45.♖xc4 ♖c6 46.♔e3 ♔e7 47.♔e4 ♔e6 48.h5 ♖c8 49.♖a4, and now the move we consider best, 49...♖d8, gives Black good drawing chances, seeing that the pawn endings after 50.♖a6† ♖d6 or 50.♖a7 ♖d4† 51.♔e3 ♖d7 ought to end in draws.

But then, with the continuation Stahlberg selects, Black should not lose either. He should therefore not be blamed for declining the queen exchange.

45.♕a2

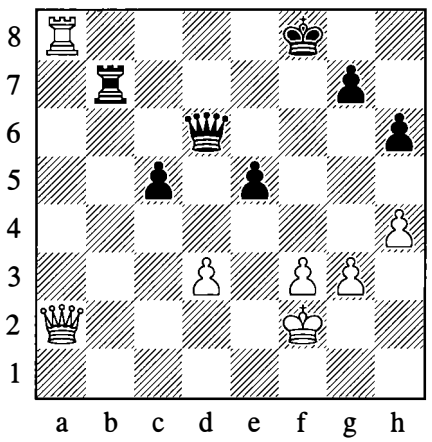
With the eviction of the hostile queen from its strong post, White can reckon that the first stage of his plan is accomplished. In the second stage, he intends to attack the king.

45...♖e7 46.♖a4 ♖b7!

A strong reply. Black is organizing a counterattack against the enemy king.

He could also play 46...♕xd3, when there would follow 47.♖a8† ♖e8 48.♖xe8† ♔xe8 49.♕g8† ♔d7 50.♕xg7† ♔c8 51.♕h8† ♔d7 52.♕xe5 c4 53.♕e3 ♕c2† 54.♔e1 c3 55.♕e2 – and by continuing 55...♕b2 or 55...♕g6, Black should reach a draw.

47.♖a8†



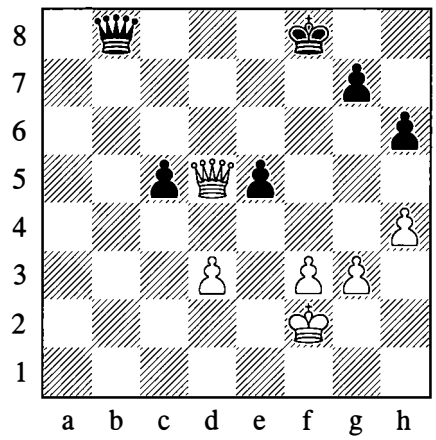
47...♖b8

Black puts too much trust in generally accepted notions, and supposes that in the queen endgame he will have no trouble drawing. A dismal tribute to convention!

And yet a draw was within his grasp. To achieve it, he should have played 47...♔e7, and if 48.♕g8 (on which White was counting), then 48...♖b2† 49.♔e1 ♖b1† 50.♔d2 ♖d1†! 51.♔xd1 ♕xd3† 52.♔c1 ♕c3† 53.♔b1 ♕d3† 54.♔b2 ♕d2† 55.♔b3 ♕d3† 56.♔a4 ♕d4† 57.♔a5 ♕d2† 58.♔a6 ♕d6† 59.♔b5 ♕d7†! 60.♔xc5 ♕d4† 61.♔b5 ♕d7† or 61...♕b2†. White's king can find no shelter – Black only needs to select checks which cannot be blocked by the queen, and this is easily done.

Thus Stahlberg could have forced a draw. All the same, his defeat in this game is entirely legitimate – for his decisive mistake was not a chance oversight or the result of some unfortunate coincidence, but his misunderstanding of the situation in a battle of major pieces. Instead of relying on White's exposed king position, Black put too much trust in the endgame with equal material. To some extent, incidentally, the same must also be said about *White's* play, which in this game was attended by a certain amount of good fortune.

48.♖xb8† ♕xb8 49.♕d5



So a queen ending has arisen with restricted and equal material. Nonetheless the chances are on White's side, thanks to the superior placing of his king and queen as well as the weakness of the pawns on e5 and c5. But then again his king is fully exposed, and the forces remaining on the board are small – hence Black is entitled to hope for a successful defence.

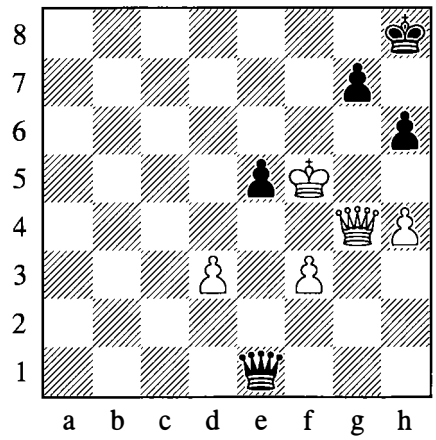
49...♕b2† 50.♔e3 ♕c1† 51.♔e2 ♕c2† 52.♔e3 ♕c1† 53.♔e4 ♕e1† 54.♔f5 ♕xg3 55.♕xc5† ♔g8 56.♕c4† ♔h8

56...♔h7 is better.

57.♕g4 ♕e1?

A fatal error. Black could still count on drawing by playing 57...♕f2. Then in the event of 58.♔xe5 ♕c5†, White again faces an endless series of checks.

Concerned to save his pawn, Black forfeits his king.



58.♔g6! ♕c1 59.♕d7 ♕g1† 60.♔f7 ♔h7 61.♕f5† g6 62.♕d7
1–0

Before drawing conclusions, we will examine one more game – in full this time, for the game itself more or less sums up our observations. Almost everything specific to the topic that interests us finds expression here. What especially stands out is the attack against an inadequately safeguarded king position.

E. Bogoljubow – A. Alekhine

Queen's Gambit
World championship (1), Germany 1934

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 c5 5.♗g5 cxd4 6.♘xd4 dxc4

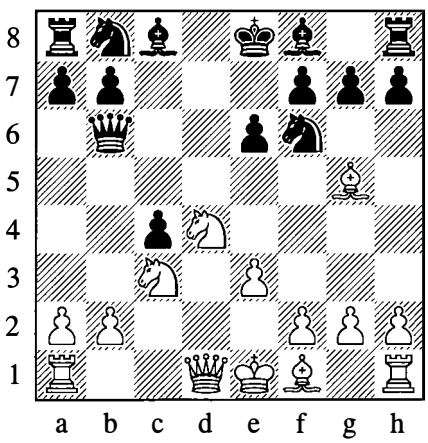
The continuation 6...e5, which justifies itself in the case of 7.♘db5 a6, proves less than fully satisfactory in view of 7.♘f3 d4 8.♘d5 ♘c6 9.e4, Euwe – Alekhine, Netherlands exhibition (4) 1937.

7.e3 ♕b6

Alekhine is rejecting the usual paths of development in the Semi-Tarrasch Defence, but the variation he selects is, to say the least, risky. His previous move already gives rise to doubts, but the queen sortie is so unsatisfactory that we are even hard put to comment on it. White now acquires a huge lead in development.

If we ask what gives rise to moves such as the ones Alekhine plays here, we should most likely seek the answer in his aversion for convention, his effort to take the struggle beyond the limits of excessive "correctness", and, finally, his immense self-confidence.

A useful move would be 7...h6, to be followed by ...♗e7 and ...0–0.



8.♗xf6 gxf6 9.♗xc4 ♗d7

Capturing with 9...♕xb2 would be suicidal, offering White an agreeable choice:

a) 10.0–0 ♕xc3? 11.♖c1 was suggested by Levenfish, after which 11...♕b4 12.♗b5† ♘d7 13.♘xe6! gives White a strong attack

b) Even more convincing is 10.♘db5 ♗b4 11.0–0 ♗xc3 12.♖b1 ♕d2 13.♕a4 (Fine) and White's attack is decisive.

10.0–0 ♘c6 11.♗b3 ♗e7 12.♖c1 ♖d8

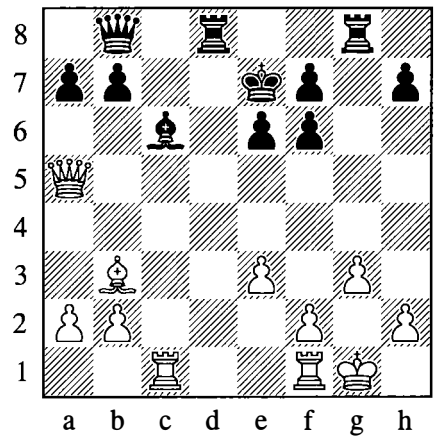
Castling queenside is worse in view of 13.♕h5.

13.♘xc6 ♗xc6 14.♕h5 ♕c5

The only tolerably good reply.

In the event of 14...♖g8 15.e4, White has two threats – ♗xe6 and ♕xh7.

15.♘d5 ♕d6 16.♘xe7 ♔xe7 17.♕a5 ♖hg8 18.g3 ♕b8



19.♗a4!

White hastens to exchange the last minor piece. In a major piece position his advantage will stand out even more clearly, thanks to the insecure position of the enemy king. Black's pawns, split into three groups, are also excellent objects of attack.

19...♖g5 20.♕c3 ♗xa4 21.♕b4† ♕d6 22.♕xa4 ♕b6

So the struggle has entered a stage with only the major pieces on the board – as it happens, all six of them. In contrast to the examples already examined, where the players were fighting with a queen and one rook each, in the present case it is only a queen exchange that will take the game into an ending.

We have not given special attention to positions of this type, as the major piece battle that takes place in them differs little from the usual processes of the middlegame, and the arguments in the introduction to this chapter can be applied to them only to a small extent.

23.♖c3 ♖b5 24.♖fc1 ♖d7

Black needs to protect his king.

Thus, if 24...♖xb2?!, then 25.♖c7† ♔f8 26.♕f4 ♖b1 27.♕xf6 and White has a clear advantage in view of Black's exposed king and weak pawns.

25.♕a3† ♕d6 26.♕xa7 ♖xb2 27.♖c8 ♖d2 28.e4

Played in order to avoid checks on the long diagonal after Black's ...♖d1†.

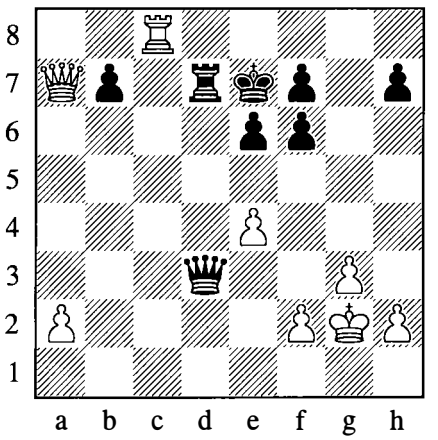
28...♖d1†?!

Black feels compelled to exchange a pair of rooks and go into the familiar type of position with four major pieces. In his view, the reduction of material should somewhat weaken his opponent's pressure.

However, it was more accurate to first seek an exchange of queens: 28...♕d4! 29.♕a3† ♕d6 30.♕a8 (otherwise Black plays ...♕d4 again) 30...f5 31.♖h8!? (threatening ♕f8† with a mating attack) 31...♔f6!, and with ...♖d1† to follow, Black equalizes.

Note that the immediate 28...f5 is somewhat worse in view of 29.♕e3.

29.♖xd1 ♕xd1† 30.♔g2 ♕d3



There is equal material on the board, but the black king is in a considerably more dangerous position than its opposite number. It is therefore in White's interest to maintain the middlegame tension as before. Black, whose king is centralized, would prefer to play an endgame, notwithstanding even the weakness of his h7-pawn. These considerations leave a certain imprint on the play of both opponents.

31.♕c5† ♕d6

Not 31...♖d6 in view of 32.♕b4, defending and attacking.

32.♕c3 b5 33.♖c6 ♕d4 34.♕c2 b4

Black doesn't have a wide choice of moves. His pieces are occupying good positions for defence, and it would hardly serve him to alter those positions without compulsion. For example, 34...♖b7 can be met by 35.♖c8 with the threat of ♕c6.

White's plan, or more exactly one of his tasks, will consist of attacking the b4-pawn by various means, with the aim of diverting his opponent's pieces from the defence of their king.

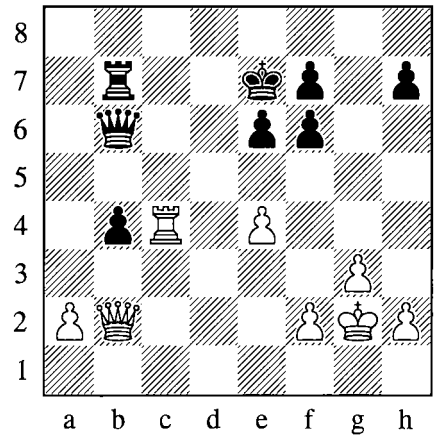
35.♖c4

White too is restricted in his search for paths to victory. An exchange of queens or rooks would most probably lead to a draw. It would also be pointless for his rook to leave the c-file, as Black could then play ...♕c3.

In answer to 35.♖c8, Black can calmly play 35...♖d8.

35...♕b6 36.♕b2 ♖b7

White has fulfilled the first part of his plan. The black pieces have been diverted to protect the b4-pawn. What follows next is an assault on the main defensive rampart – the pawn triangle f7-f6-e6. The third stage of the operation will be an attack with pieces against the king. A typical middlegame plan!



37.e5 fxe5 38.♕xe5 ♕d6 39.♕g5† ♔d7

Whether Black likes it or not, his king is forced to set off on a dangerous journey.

40.♖f4 f5

Black's defence is difficult. In the event of 40...♔c6, White could maintain the initiative with 41.♕h4 or 41.♕g4. Nevertheless the king move would have given Black more chances to defend successfully. The move in the game, severing the connection between d5 and h5, impairs his queen's communication with the kingside, and this in turn makes the white king's position more comfortable.

41.♔h3

White removes his king from a possible check on d5, but 41.♕f6, with the threat of ♖d4, would have been even stronger.

The continuation 41...♕d5† 42.♔h3 ♕xa2 43.♖d4† ♔c6 44.♕e5 gives White a decisive attack.

The immediate 41...♔c6 is met by 42.♖d4, when the best Black can do is settle for an endgame a pawn down after 42...♕e7.

41...♔c6 42.♕g8

White has no direct threats, but his raids from the rear, for instance with ♕a8, and his potential for checking promise him a lasting initiative.

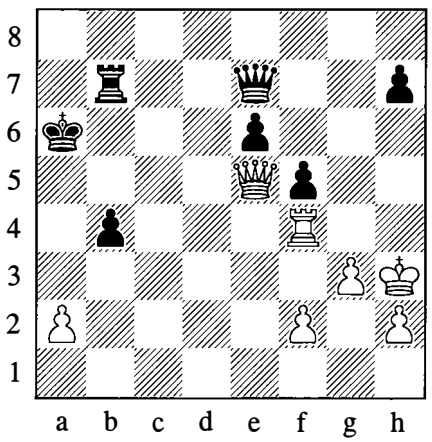
42...♔b5 43.♕e8† ♕d7

Likewise after 43...♔b6 44.♕a4, White's attack continues with undiminished force.

44.♕f8 ♕e7 45.♕a8

Threatening 46.a3 bxa3 47.♖a4.

45...♖a7 46.♕b8† ♖b7 47.♕e5† ♔a6



48.♖c4

White had other strong continuations besides this one. As demonstrated by the analyses of many players who have annotated this game in their time, 48.a3 here would have given White an irresistible attack. Indeed with that move he would be eliminating the enemy king's last remaining pawn cover, as well as ridding himself of his own weakness which was later to furnish Black's main drawing chance in the endgame.

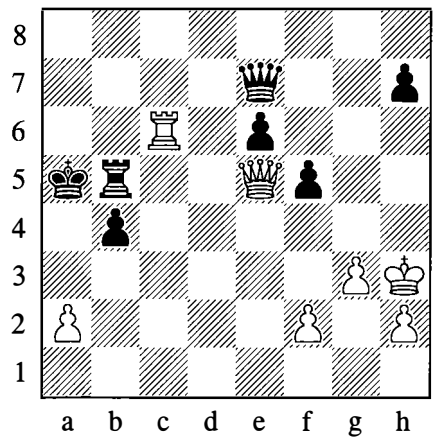
The best defence would be 48...♖b5 (48...bxa3 49.♖a4† ♔b6 50.♕a5† ♔c6 51.♖c4† quickly leads to mate), but to this White has the strong reply 49.♕e2. In view of the threats of a4 and axb4, Black is forced to play 49...bxa3. White then continues: 50.♖a4† ♔b6 51.♕e3† ♔c6 52.♖a6† ♔c7 53.♖a7† (53.♖xe6 is also sufficient although less forcing) 53...♖b7 54.♕e5† ♔c8 55.♖a8† ♔d7 56.♕d4† ♔c7 57.♕c4† ♔d7 (57...♔d6 58.♖a6† ♔e5 59.♕c3† ♔d5 60.♖a4) 58.♕c8† ♔d6 59.♖a6† ♔e5 60.♕c3† ♔d5 61.♖a4 ♕c5 62.♕f3† with decisive gains.

But although White missed a forced win at this juncture, his chosen continuation still maintains a decisive initiative.

48...♖b5 49.♖c6† ♔a5

A propitiatory pawn sacrifice! Black's king has been harassed too much, and he dreams only of an endgame, even if it is one where his chances are worse.

The answer to 49...♖b6 would be 50.♖c7 ♕d6 51.♕e2† ♖b5 52.♕c2 ♔b6 53.♖xh7, with an extra pawn in a middlegame position.



50.♕xe6

Gaining a pawn, but losing... the middlegame. The endgame is not as easy to win as it must have seemed to White, for Black has good counter-chances on the queenside. White should have conducted the fight still further under middlegame conditions, relying on the bad position of the enemy king. His betrayal of this policy was to receive just punishment.

Here is how the struggle could have developed after 50.♕h8!, the strongest move to continue the attack:

a) 50...♔a4 51.♖a6† ♖a5 52.♕c8 and wins.

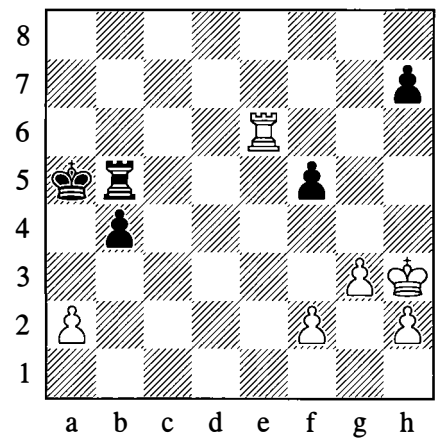
b) 50...♖b7 51.♕d4 ♕d7 52.♕c4 ♖b5 53.a4! bxa3 54.♕c3† and Black is quickly mated.

c) 50...♖b6 51.♕a8† ♔b5 53.♖c1! and Black has no good answer to the threat of 54.a4† bxa3 55.♖b1†.

d) 50...♕b7 51.♕d8† ♔a4 52.♕d6 ♔a5 53.a3! and wins.

50...♕xe6 51.♖xe6

So an endgame has been reached in which White has definite chances. From the point of view of our topic, the remainder of the game ought not to interest us. For completeness, however, we will follow the game to the finish (albeit without annotations), in order to show how White was punished for deviating from the thematic course of the major piece battle.



51...♖d5 52.♖e2 ♖d6 53.f4 ♖h6† 54.♔g2 ♔b5 55.h3 ♖g6 56.♔f3 h5 57.♖e5† ♔c4 58.♖xf5 ♖a6 59.♖xh5 ♖xa2 60.♖h8 b3 61.♖c8† ♔d4 62.♖d8† ♔c3 63.♖c8† ♔d3 64.♖d8† ♔c3 65.♖c8†

At this point Alekhine claimed a draw by threefold repetition, to which the arbiter mistakenly assented. Bogoljubow protested, but was unable to substantiate his protest because, owing to time trouble, he had not been keeping the score accurately.

½–½

What remains is a brief summing up, which amounts to the following. The struggle of the major pieces on the lines we have examined is a middlegame process, and any attempts to bring the king into this struggle as an active piece are correspondingly risky. Nonetheless, in this type of contest, some factors associated with the endgame (the role of a passed pawn, and so forth) increase in significance – while operations such as a pawn storm, and various pawn configurations in the centre and elsewhere, conversely lose much of their effectiveness. The major piece battle is usually characterized by very sharp play, given that these pieces possess the maximum range of mobility and can be transferred quickly to any sector of the board.

Chapter 7

Manoeuvring – The Initiative

In chess books and annotations we quite often come across the term "manoeuvring". Following the example of the late Grandmaster Tartakower, the concept of "tacking" to and fro is sometimes substituted for that of manoeuvring, although in their literal meanings the two terms are not wholly identical.

Nor should the concept of "manoeuvring" be confused with that of "a manoeuvre". A manoeuvre means a few moves with one piece, usually carried out for some specific purpose. *Manoeuvring* means a series of manoeuvres with various pieces, of a more or less protracted nature and rarely having a clearly circumscribed aim.

In the late nineteenth century the concept of manoeuvring was associated with the dogmatism advanced by several representatives of the English and German chess schools. In a number of cases these masters began recommending a policy of waiting. One of the players, following these recommendations, will bide his time until the opponent finally creates an appreciable weakness in his own camp or commits some other error. It may also happen that *both* opponents summon up all their patience and set about manoeuvring within their lines of communication at the rear; pursuing tactics of extreme caution, each of them tries not to give the other the slightest opportunity to attack.

This does not of course mean that every kind of manoeuvring merits disapproval.

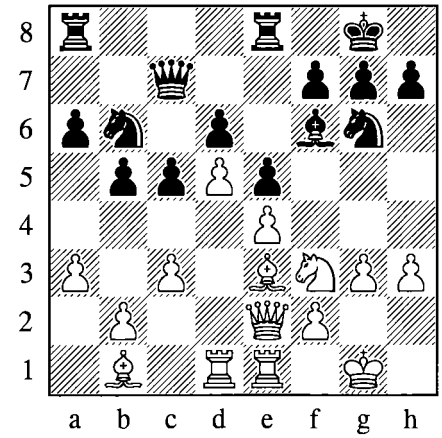
In the matter of manoeuvring we can detect some differences of degree. As against the temporizing, aimless form of manoeuvring, there is also a necessary and systematic form – which occurs in situations where lengthy manoeuvres with the pieces and pawns are required to achieve our designated aim. This form of manoeuvring is to be observed with particular frequency in positions of the closed type, that is, with mutually blocked pawn chains.

It is with positions of this type – which are difficult to play and demand a shrewd and far-sighted appraisal of the situation – that we will begin our survey.

Em. Lasker – A. Burn

St Petersburg 1909

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0–0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 ♘a5 9.♗c2 c5 10.d4 ♕c7 11.♘bd2 ♘c6 12.♘f1 0–0 13.♘e3 ♗g4 14.♘xg4 ♘xg4 15.h3 ♘f6 16.♗e3 ♘d7 17.♕e2 ♗f6 18.♖ad1 ♘e7 19.♗b1 ♘b6 20.a3 ♘g6 21.g3 ♖fe8 22.d5



Fearing his opponent's tactical chances associated with ...d6-d5, and intending to prepare a kingside attack without hindrance and in his own good time, Lasker has closed the position by playing 22.d5.

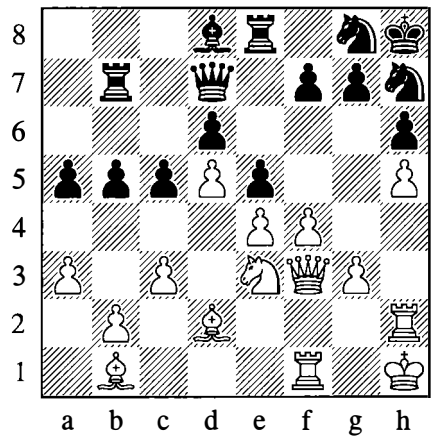
The struggle might have continued more interestingly and sharply if the central tension had been maintained, but the closing of the position also amounts to a perfectly feasible plan, with just the difference that in this case the attainment of a concrete aim must wait until a later moment in the game. Of necessity, the following play takes the form of long-drawn-out manoeuvring.

22...♘d7 23.♔g2 ♕d8 24.h4 ♗e7 25.h5 ♘f8 26.♖h1

Now Black will be left in control of the g5-square, and this will serve as the main obstacle to the development of White's offensive. White could have set his opponent more difficult problems with 26.h6, seizing space on the kingside before going into action on the queenside with b2-b4, a3-a4 etc.

26...h6 27.♖g1 ♘h7 28.♔f1 ♔h8 29.♖h2 ♖g8 30.♘e1 ♖b8 31.♘c2 a5 32.♗d2 ♗f6 33.f3 ♘b6 34.♖f2 ♘c8 35.♔g2 ♕d7 36.♔h1 ♘e7 37.♖h2 ♖b7 38.♖f1 ♖e8 39.♘e3 ♘g8 40.f4 ♗d8 41.♕f3

The manoeuvring has lasted 20 moves now, and both opponents have been keeping their forces in close contact with the critical points on the board. White's kingside offensive has been halted, and it is only on the queenside that there is the glimmer of a possibility to play ♗c2 and then try to gain control of the light squares with c3-c4.



41...c4?

Anticipating the possibility just mentioned, Black forestalls the white c-pawn's advance but overlooks an active move with a different pawn.

However, 41...a4 would also be bad in view of 42.c4, and if 42...b4 then 43.axb4 cxb4 44.fxe5 ♖xe5 45.♘g4 ♖e8 46.e5 with good chances for White.

In all probability, Black's best move was to return his bishop to f6.

42.a4

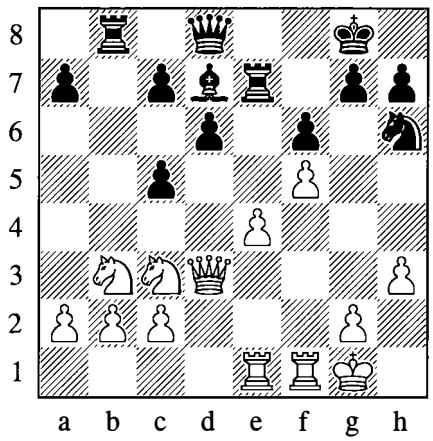
After this move, the play livened up, and soon lost its manoeuvring character. Black's queenside pawns turned out to be weak, and this eventually decided the outcome of the game.

...1–0

In the next example, Lasker was once again the instigator of numerous manoeuvres with the pieces.

Em. Lasker – G. Salwe

St Petersburg 1909



In contrast to the previous example, the pawn chains here are not blocked. There are also open files and weak points – in a word, plenty of objects providing scope for planning. White has made territorial gains on the kingside. However, over the course of the next 20 moves, the players conduct the fight in a manoeuvring style.

17.♘d5 ♖e8 18.c4 ♘f7 19.♕c3

White defends the b2 point, to make it possible to manoeuvre with his b3-knight.

19...♖e5 20.♘d2 c6 21.♘f4 ♕b6 22.b3 ♖be8

Better is 22...♕b4 23.♕d3 ♖e7, with ...a5-a4 to follow.

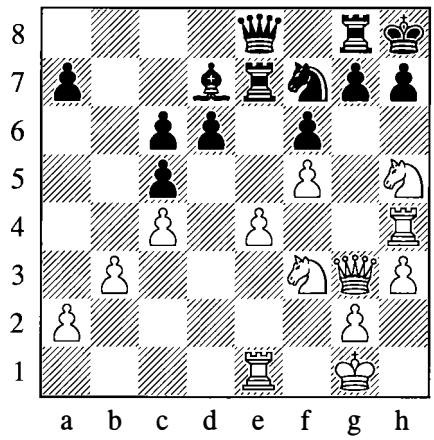
23.♕g3

White now threatens ♘h5, but Black "spots" the threat.

23...♔h8 24.♘h5 ♖g8 25.♖f4 ♕d8

Again White was intending to attack the pawns on g7 and f6 by playing ♖g4, but Black parries the threat without difficulty.

26.♘f3 ♖e7 27.♖h4 ♕e8



White's pawn on e4 is weak, and in view of the need to defend it, the manoeuvres by which he attempts to pressure the Black king's position are none too effective. Lasker's next move is surprising, and deserves attention above all by reason of his own appraisal of it.

28.♕f2

Here is how Lasker explains the motive of his queen's retreat: "Black's position is cramped, but no winning combination for White is in sight. For that reason White must first try to disorganize Black's pieces by means of fresh attacks, and afterwards revert to his original aggressive plan."

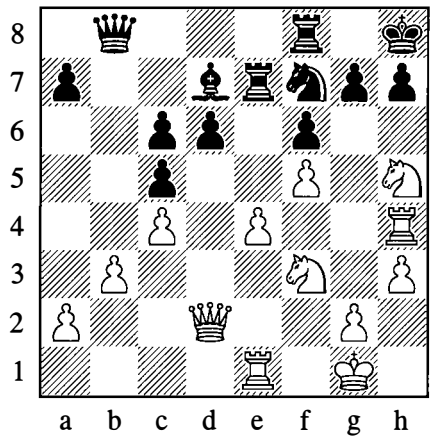
What "fresh attacks" did Lasker have in mind? Black's d6-pawn, defended only by the knight, is weak; White may be intending to look in precisely this direction, yet his attack against d6 is fully counterbalanced by Black's against the e4-pawn.

A new phase of manoeuvring on Lasker's part now commences, with the long-term purpose of drawing away some piece or other from Black's defence of his kingside. White

leaves a rook and both knights on "guard duty", waiting for a suitable opportunity in that sector of the board, while his queen and the other rook begin manoeuvring in the central zone.

However, at this point Black could have relieved his position by 28...♘g5. It would therefore have been more accurate for White to play 28.♘f4 ♘h6, and only then 29.♕f2.

28...♖f8 29.♕d2 ♕b8



30.♔h1

The point of this move remains unclear, but then the manoeuvring style is characterized by not being the product of a concrete scheme.

30...♖fe8 31.♖g4 ♖g8

Not 31...♘h6, in view of 32.♘xg7 or 32.♖xg7.

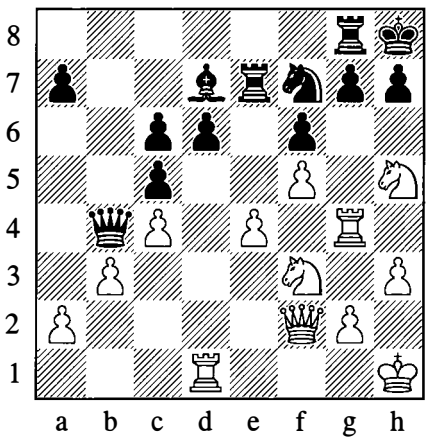
Another bad line is 31...♘e5 32.♘xe5 dxe5, as White could once again play 33.♘xg7, winning a crucial pawn.

32.♖d1 ♕b4

Black shows signs of nervousness. He ought not to be severing the contact between the queen and the rest of his forces and removing the former from the defence of the d6-pawn.

32...♕e8 is more solid, but even then White can increase the pressure with 33.♕c3 (threatening ♘xf6) 33...♘e5 34.♖h4, followed by ♘f4.

33.♕f2



33...♕c3

With the aim of defending the f6 point. However, White's scheme now begins to justify itself. He has succeeded in isolating Black's queen from the rest of his army, and the function of guarding f6 is too modest for such a powerful piece.

But the alternatives have their drawbacks too; thus 33...♘h6 is bad, as after 34.♖h4 White threatens both ♘xf6 and ♖xd6.

And withdrawing the queen with 33...♕b8 fails to 34.♕h4 ♘h6 35.♘xf6!.

34.♕h4?

After the accurate 34.♕g3! ♘h6 35.♕xd6! ♘xg4 36.hxg4, with e4-e5 to follow, Black's fortifications collapse.

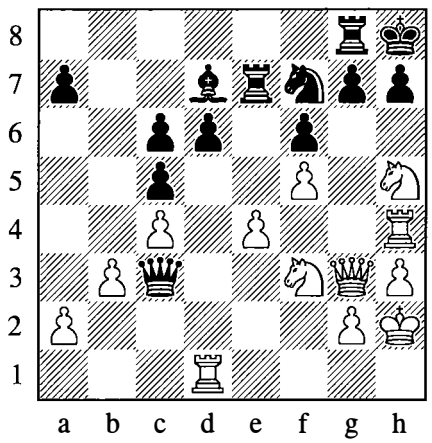
34...♘h6 35.♖f4 ♘f7?!

It was worth disturbing the knight on h5 by 35...♗e8, after which the worst is over for Black. The d6-pawn is invulnerable in view of 36.♖xd6 ♗xh5 37.♕xh5 ♕c1†.

36.♔h2 ♖ge8?

He shouldn't have left the g7-point undefended, giving White an attacking tempo.

37.♕g3 ♖g8 38.♖h4



An extremely interesting moment – the position that arose after move 27 in the game is now repeated, with just these differences: White's rook has shifted from e1 to d1 and his king from g1 to h2, while the black queen is on c3 not e8.

This position is immeasurably better for White than the earlier one. The threat of ♘f4 turns out to be very dangerous, and indeed seems irresistible – for example 38...♘e5 39.♘f4 and now 39...♘xf3† 40.♕xf3 ♕xf3 41.♘g6#, or 39...♗c8 40.♖xh7† with mate to follow.

38...g5

The position opens up – the manoeuvring is at an end.

39.fxg6 ♖xg6 40.♕f2 f5 41.♘f4 ♖f6 42.♘e2 ♕b2 43.♖d2 ♕a1 44.♘g3 ♔g8 45.exf5 ♗xf5 46.♘d4! cxd4 47.♘xf5 ♔f8 48.♕xd4

White has won a pawn with a good position, and with it he won the game.

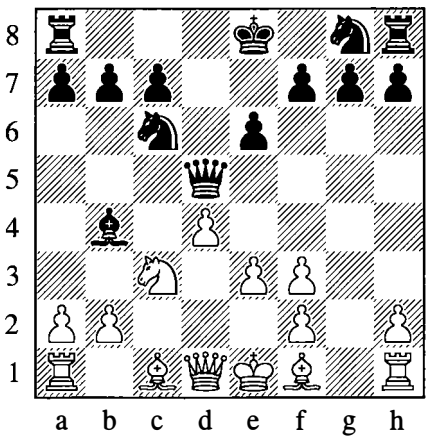
...1–0

Lasker was fond of manoeuvring in general and appears to have supposed that in this department he had no equals. In the following game, however, he was given a taste of his own medicine.

Em. Lasker – M. Chigorin

Queen's Gambit, Chigorin Defence
Hastings 1895

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♗g4 3.c4 ♗xf3 4.gxf3 ♘c6 5.♘c3 e6 6.e3 ♗b4 7.cxd5 ♕xd5



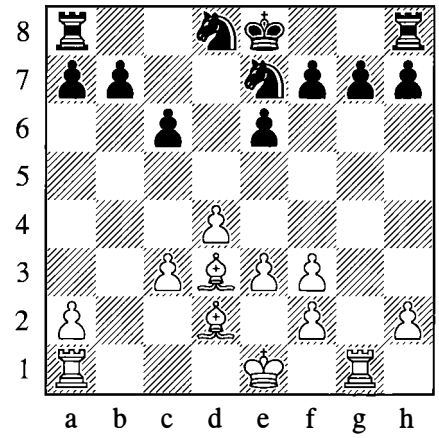
The game is developing in quite a sharp and tense manner, and it is hard to imagine that within a mere five moves it will enter the realm of protracted manoeuvring.

8.♗d2 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♘ge7 10.♖g1 ♕h5 11.♕b3 ♘d8 12.♕b5†

White forces a queen exchange, to make it easier to utilize "the strength of the two bishops".

There are players (and among the strongest masters in the world at the time of this game, there were many such) who regard possession of the two bishops as a special type of positional advantage. We shall set out our own view of this matter in the next chapter.

12...♕xb5 13.♗xb5† c6 14.♗d3



From this moment the struggle enters a lengthy manoeuvring period which will continue almost until the very end of the game. It will be another twenty moves and more before the next pawn exchange occurs, and a full forty before the next piece exchange – which, at the same time, will be the manoeuvre that actually clinches victory.

[Editor's note: "From today's perspective, this ending is already virtually won for White: his two mighty bishops give him a huge plus." – Kasparov]

14...♘g6 15.f4 0–0 16.♔e2 ♖c8 17.♖g3

White plans to double rooks on the g-file and then attack with h2-h4. This looks quite menacing, but it is parried by relatively simple means.

We may say that the manoeuvring by the players in the present game is much more purposeful and systematic in character than it was in our previous examples.

17...c5 18.♖ag1

White is consistent (he now threatens to decide the game by 19.h4, or even better 19.f5 exf5 20.♗xf5 ♖c7 21.h4) but... he is ignoring his opponent's plan.

It would be better to play at once 18.f5 exf5 19.♗xf5 ♖c7 20.♖ag1 cxd4 21.cxd4 ♔h8. The threat of h2-h4 has been parried, but in the wide spaces of the position that has opened up, the white pieces will be operating rather more actively.

18...c4 19.♗c2 f5 20.♗c1 ♖f7 21.♗a3 ♖c6 22.♗c5 ♖a6 23.a4 ♘c6 24.♖b1 ♖d7 25.♖gg1 ♘ge7 26.♖b2

[Editor's note: "With 26.♗xe7 ♘xe7 27.♔d2 ♘d5 28.♖b5 White would still preserve some advantage." – Kasparov]

26...♘d5 27.♔d2 ♖a5 28.♖gb1 b6 29.♗a3 g6 30.♖b5 ♖a6 31.♗c1 ♘d8

Black's manoeuvring, though performed under compulsion, amounts to anything but a waiting game. By threatening to penetrate with a knight to e4, he wishes to induce f2-f3 and then put pressure on his opponent's centre pawn.

32.♖a1 ♘f7 33.♖bb1 ♘d6

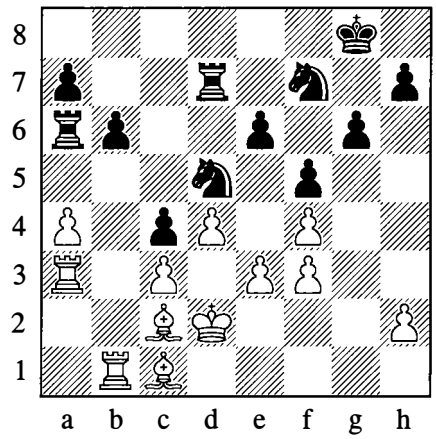
As part of his manoeuvring plan, Black will undoubtedly have thought about opening the g-file, and the move ...g5 is at his disposal for that purpose. For the time being he refrains from it, taking into account the isolated position of his rook on a6 – which would have difficulty establishing cooperation with Black's other pieces if the position opened up.

Nevertheless Steinitz considered that an immediate 33...g5 34.fxg5 ♘xg5 35.♖a3 ♘e4† 36.♗xe4 fxe4, followed by 37...♖g7, would have led to a winning attack.

Levenfish was later to show that in place of 35.♖a3 White has the stronger 35.♗b2, but even so, after 35...♘e4† 36.♗xe4 fxe4, Black's dominant knight compels us to evaluate the position in his favour. True, his advantage would scarcely be sufficient for victory. White could continue 37.♖g1† ♖g7 38.♖xg7† ♔xg7 39.♔e2, preparing f2-f3. He would have fairly good resources for fighting stubbornly for the draw.

34.f3 ♘f7 35.♖a3

Preparing to meet ...g5, White frees his king from the defence of the c3-pawn.



35...g5

It is notable that even after this advance that opens the position, there will be over twenty more moves in which the game is dominated by manoeuvring.

In annotating this game with its astonishing creative substance, some writers have asserted that Black ought to have preferred a prophylactic waiting line, and that for the time being his efforts should have been limited to stopping White's e3-e4. Quite apart from the fact that Chigorin could not abide passive tactics, it is extremely doubtful whether Black *could* prevent the advance of the e-pawn. For example: 35...♘d6 36.♔e2 ♖f7 37.♗d2 ♔f8 38.♔f2 ♔e7 39.♔g3 ♘f6 40.♖aa1, and after bringing one rook to f1 and the other to e1, White will carry out the e3-e4 break after all – and with three times the power that it has in the actual game.

36.♔e2 gxf4 37.e4 ♘f6 38.♗xf4

[Editor's note: "The game is opening up, to White's obvious benefit." – Kasparov]

38...♘h5 39.♗e3 f4 40.♗f2 ♖a5 41.♖g1† ♔f8 42.♖aa1 e5 43.♖ab1 ♘g7 44.♖b4 ♖c7 45.♗b1 ♘e6 46.♖d1 ♘d8!

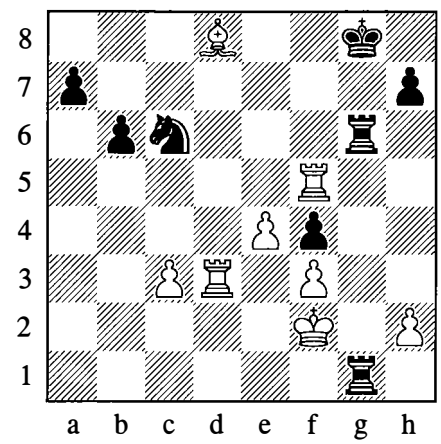
Black threatens to win a pawn by ...♘c6.

47.♖d2?

White decides to give up a pawn, counting on opening the position and acquiring scope for his bishops to operate. It is worth noting that in the initial period of his career Lasker was a great believer in the "two bishops".

[Editor's note: "A gross error. The calm 47.♗c2 would still have left White with the better chances." – Kasparov]

47...♘c6 48.♖b5 ♖xa4 49.dxe5 ♘xe5 50.♗h4 ♖g7 51.♔f2 ♖g6 52.♖dd5 ♖a1 53.♗d8 ♘d3† 54.♗xd3 cxd3 55.♖xd3 ♖ag1 56.♖f5† ♔g8



Black's systematic manoeuvring has culminated in an economical mating situation. Now 57.♖xf4 is met by 57...♖6g2† 58.♔e3 ♖e1#. White therefore has to part with his bishop.

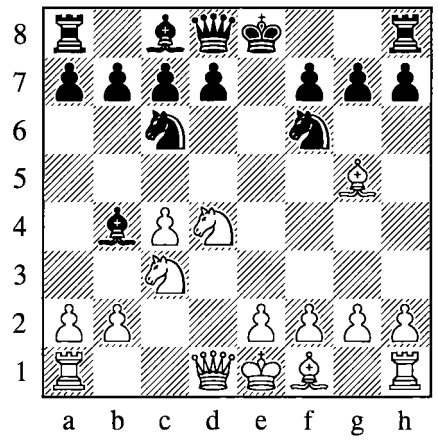
57.♗g5 ♖6xg5
0–1

The following game is another striking illustration of purposeful manoeuvring over a stretch of forty moves.

A. Alekhine – F. Yates

English Opening
Semmering 1926

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♗b4 6.♗g5



6...0–0

Black has chosen a bad moment to castle; as a result, the pin on his knight becomes the "Achilles' heel" of his position. Alekhine called this an insipid continuation.

Black should have played 6...h6 7.♗h4 ♗xc3† 8.bxc3 d6.

7.♖c1 ♖e8 8.e3 d6 9.♗e2 ♘e5

Here too, 9...h6 could have been useful.

10.0–0 ♗xc3 11.♖xc3 ♘g6?

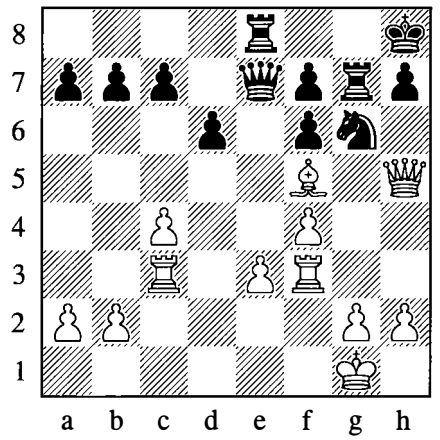
An unobtrusive error, but it proves sufficient to allow Alekhine to win the game.

Once again – Black had to play 11...h6.

12.♘db5! ♗d7

Black couldn't avoid the doubling of his pawns on the f-file.

13.♗xf6 gxf6 14.♗d3 ♔h8 15.♘d4 ♖g8 16.♕h5 ♕f8 17.f4 ♖e8 18.♖f3 ♖g7 19.♘f5 ♗xf5 20.♗xf5 ♕e7



Black's king position is seriously weakened. His pawns on f6, f7 and h7 can become objects of attack; to bring this about, however, the conditions of the kingside struggle need to be radically altered. The point is that Black's weaknesses, for the moment, are securely defended; it is hard to get at them, and the g- and e-files are in his hands. As for the position of *White's* king, it is far from ideal; should he need to push his kingside pawns for the purposes of attack, all the conditions for a counterattack by his opponent will be in place.

In a word, the advantage is with White, but converting it into something tangible is a complex and difficult task. In fact we shall see from the further course of the game that the plan devised by Alekhine amounts to a forty-move process of manoeuvring, during which only one exchange of pawns will take place. Interestingly, the final act of this process will be White's announcement of mate in six moves with the same pieces on the board as when the manoeuvring began.

White's plan involves:

1) The transfer of his king to a safe place on the queenside.
2) The advance of his g-pawn in a storming operation.
3) Manoeuvres with his pieces, aimed at harmoniously concentrating all his forces for a strike against the points f6 and h7.

Quite clearly, with complete equality of forces between the attacking and defending sides, and with pawn chains that are not blocked, the execution of this manoeuvring plan seems an extraordinarily complicated affair.

21.♗c2 ♖eg8 22.g3 ♕d7

Black is manoeuvring without any particular aim. This is easy to understand – the enemy position offers no weak points that would give him grounds for enterprising activities. At the same time, White's plan has yet to reveal itself, and for the present he too is unable to create any dangerous threats. We may suppose that at this moment Yates considered his position to be more than safe.

23.♖f2 ♕e7 24.♔f1

The king sets off on a long journey which will only be completed 15 moves later.

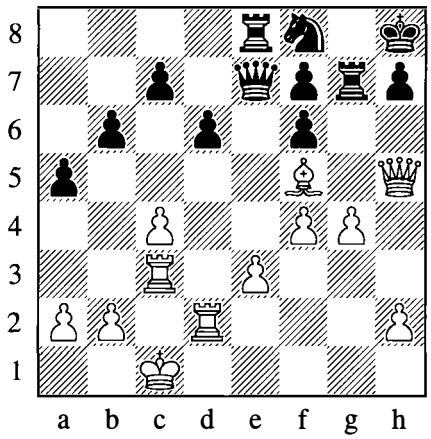
24...♖d8 25.♖d2 b6 26.♕d5 ♖gg8 27.♕f5 a5 28.♔e1 ♕e6 29.♕h5 ♕e7

Black supposes that his position is sufficiently robust, and waits for his opponent to come to the same conclusion. For that reason the manoeuvres of his pieces have no specific rationale except one – not to *worsen* his own position.

The following picture is taking shape. White manoeuvres determinedly and systematically, preparing the decisive assault on the kingside, while Black occupies himself with the manoeuvres of a waiting game. It is clear that an imaginative technique characterized by concrete designs and purposefulness ought to prevail against passive waiting tactics.

30.♔d1 ♖g7 31.♔c1 ♘f8 32.♗f5 ♖e8 33.g4

It is only after 12 more moves that this pawn will continue its advance to the square of its destination. This will not happen before White's king "settles down" in the safe corner and his pieces regroup in such a way as to extract the maximum effect from the g4-g5 advance. All this demands scrupulous, painstaking work and, of course, patience.



Alekhine was a master of great creative dynamism, but dynamics and slow manoeuvring do not go well together. It is all the more interesting to observe the peculiar "patient zeal" with which – curbing his temperament and his dynamism of thought – he conducts the manoeuvring process over a long series of moves.

The manoeuvres of White's pieces are instructive, and in order to understand some of them we need to look deeply into all the ramifications of his plan. Take for example the manoeuvres of his bishop (from move 21 until the end of the game): ♗f5-c2-f5-c2-a4-d1-c2-f5. The bishop goes to c2 and f5 three times, and once each to a4 and d1. This "running about" may look pointless, and it was not of course the decisive factor in White's manoeuvring – but it does indicate that on this occasion restlessness, haste and any straining after a forced line of play had been banished from Alekhine's devices and methods.

33...♘g6 34.a3 ♕d8 35.♗c2 ♕c8 36.♔b1 ♘e7 37.h3 ♘g6 38.♕h6 ♕d8 39.♔a2 ♘e7

Intending to answer 40.♕xf6? with 40...♘d5!.

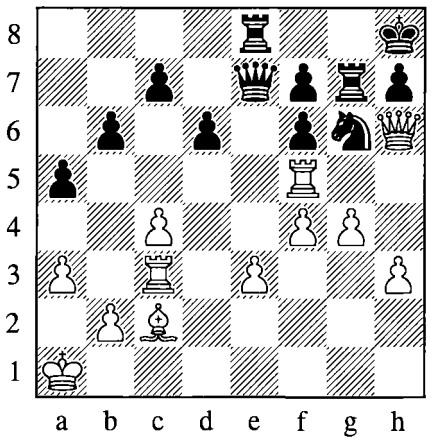
40.♔a1 ♘g6 41.♗a4

An intermediate move, which has the aim of either disturbing the harmony of the black rooks' actions or else freeing the e-file from the excessive influence of the enemy forces.

41...♖eg8 42.♗d1 ♕e7 43.♗c2 ♘f8 44.♖d5 ♘g6 45.♖f5

The black knight is now tied to its square.

45...♖e8



46.g5

Finally! And yet at the present moment Alekhine was still tempted to wait. At any rate, he commented on this move as follows: "It may have been more accurate to prepare this breakthrough with 46.h4. But as played, it is strong enough."

46...fxg5 47.♖xg5

Threats are emerging – in the first place, f4-f5.

47...♕f8

Anything else loses quickly. For example 47...♖gg8 48.♖h5 ♖g7 49.f5, or 47...♖eg8 48.f5 f6 49.♖xg6.

48.♖h5

If now 48.f5, Black plays 48...♘e5 49.f6 ♖g6! 50.♕xf8† ♖xf8 51.♗xg6 fxg6, and White has no more than minimal winning chances.

48...♕g8 49.♔a2 ♘f8

The manoeuvring has entered its final phase. To increase the pressure, it is essential for White to bring his idle rook on c3 into play. This indeed is the object of his next efforts.

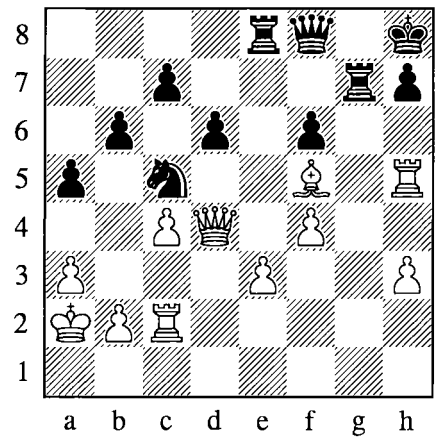
50.♕f6 ♘d7 51.♕d4

Threatening ♗xh7 or ♖xh7†.

51...f6 52.♗f5 ♕f8 53.♖h6 ♖ge7 54.♖h5

The weakness of the points f6 and h7 makes Black's position untenable.

54...♘c5 55.♖c2 ♖g7



56.♖g2 ♖ee7

Of course, 56...♖xg2 is bad in view of 57.♖xh7† ♔g8 58.♕d5† ♘e6 59.♕xg2† ♘g7 60.♕g6, with the irresistible threat of ♖h8† and ♕h7#.

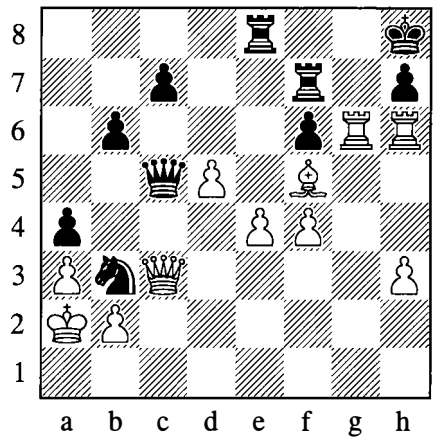
57.♖g4

White could also play the immediate 57.♖h6 ♖xg2 58.♖xf6.

57...a4 58.♖h6 ♖gf7 59.♖gg6 ♘b3 60.♕c3 d5

Hastening Black's inevitable defeat.

61.cxd5 ♖e8 62.e4 ♕c5



White announced mate in six moves (63.♖xh7†!).

1–0

Thus ended the forty-move-long manoeuvring process. The active party in this process was White. Black adopted a waiting stance – and was ultimately waiting to be mated.

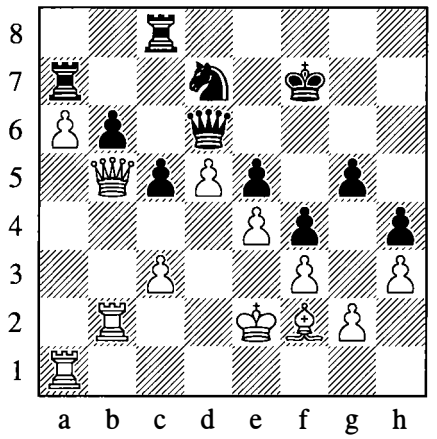
The example of the classic chess achievements of Chigorin and Alekhine convinces us that a policy of manoeuvring may conceal profound aims and ideas beneath its surface. For the monotonous manoeuvring processes to be set aflame with ideas, however, we need an impulse in which both an indomitable fighting spirit and creative zeal are combined with mastery of chess.

Where these conditions are absent, we become witnesses of a tedious manoeuvring game of little interest, which undoubtedly impoverishes the creative content of the chess struggle.

To some extent this is a fair comment even on the following two examples, where the manoeuvring is half enforced and only half a matter of waiting tactics.

J. Blackburne – A. Albin

Hastings 1895



In spite of his extra pawn White can achieve nothing – the structure of the position is such as to make a breakthrough impossible. The potential weakness of the black pawn on b6 cannot be exploited. There are no open files on the board, and the major pieces on both sides are condemned to inactivity. But since he *is* a pawn up, Blackburne doesn't want to settle for a draw. What therefore ensues is a manoeuvring process over a long stretch of moves, in which White is simply waiting to see if Black will chance to relax his guard over the b6-pawn.

Black can likewise undertake nothing, and is compelled to manoeuvre. Defending b6 is no particular trouble. Let us see how events unfolded.

40.♔d3 ♔g6 41.♔c4 ♔h5 42.♗e1 ♖cc7 43.♖ab1 ♖c8 44.♗f2 ♖cc7 45.♔d3 ♕g6? 46.♔c2

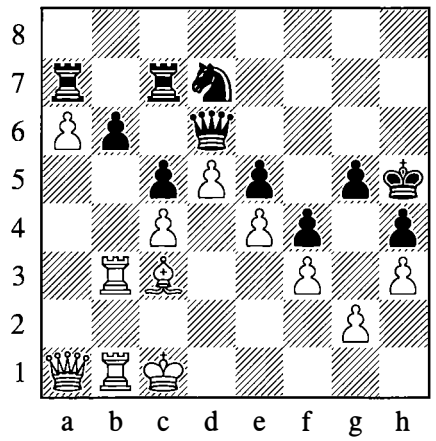
White should have played 46.d6, taking the opportunity that happened to arise – and if 46...♕xd6†, then 47.♔e2 followed by seizure of the d-file.

46...♕d6

Immediately correcting the mistake he made last move. The queen is now "rooted" to the d6-square.

47.♕e2 ♔h6 48.♔c1 ♖c8 49.♕b5 ♔h5 50.c4 ♖cc7 51.♗e1 ♖a8 52.♗c3 ♖aa7 53.♖b3 ♖c8 54.♕a4 ♖cc7 55.♕a1

White has surreptitiously created a threat of ♖xb6 followed by ♗xe5.



55...♖c8 56.♔c2 ♖ca8 57.♖a3 ♕c7

Black has decided on some activity of his own. The point of his queen manoeuvre is to attack the a6-pawn, on condition of course that White relaxes the pressure against e5.

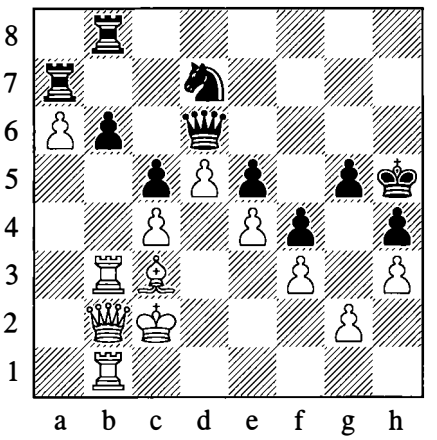
58.♖b2 ♕c8 59.♖ba2 ♕c7 60.♕b2 ♕d6 61.♖b3

A new attempt to achieve something after 61...♖xa6 62.♖xa6 ♖xa6 63.♖a3 ♖xa3 64.♕xa3, with subsequent penetration into Black's camp via c6. But Albin avoids the temptation, and again White is left with nothing.

61...♖c8 62.♖a4 ♖ca8 63.♔d2 ♖e8 64.♖a1 ♖ea8 65.♔c2 ♖e8 66.♖a4 ♖ea8 67.♔d1 ♖c8 68.♔c1

The patience with which Blackburne waits for a mistake on his opponent's part is a quality that deserves to be employed in the best possible way. Unexpectedly, it receives its reward...

68...♖ca8 69.♔b1 ♖c8 70.♔c2 ♖ca8 71.♖ba3 ♖c8 72.♕b5 ♔g6 73.♖b3 ♔h5 74.♖a1 ♔g6 75.♖ab1 ♔h5 76.♕a4 ♖cc7 77.♖1b2 ♖c8 78.♕a1 ♖ca8 79.♖a2 ♖b8 80.♕b2 ♔g6 81.♖a1 ♔h5 82.♖b1



Cunning Blackburne has succeeded in complicating Black's task somewhat. For instance in the event of 82...♖xa6 83.♖a3 ♖ba8 84.♖ba1, White seizes the a-file. If the rook on b8 leaves its post, an exchange sacrifice on b6 follows.

The sole correct continuation is 82...♔g6!. Albin was evidently afraid of a sacrifice on e5, but without justification. The variation 83.♗xe5 ♘xe5! 84.♖xb6 ♖xb6 85.♕xb6 ♖xa6! is in Black's favour.

82...♖ba8?

Aiming to ensure possession of the a-file after ...♖xa6, but in the present circumstances the weakening of b6 proves fatal.

83.♖xb6!

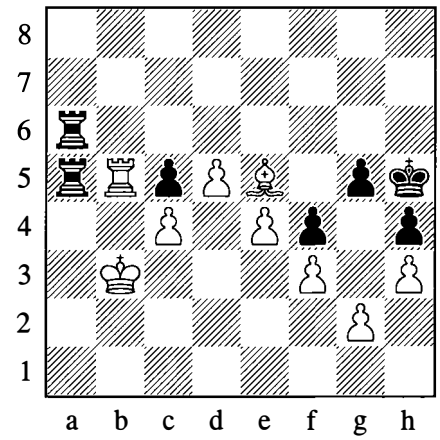
Now or never!

83...♘xb6 84.♕xb6 ♖xa6 85.♕xd6 ♖xd6 86.♖b5

86.♗xe5 is also playable.

86...♖a2† 87.♗b2 ♖da6 88.♔b3 ♖2a5

89.♗xe5



And White went on to win.

...1–0

In the following game the manoeuvring begins virtually in the opening, and perhaps *because* of the opening.

P. Romanovsky – M. Botvinnik

Ruy Lopez
Moscow 1935

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.♘c3 f6 6.d3

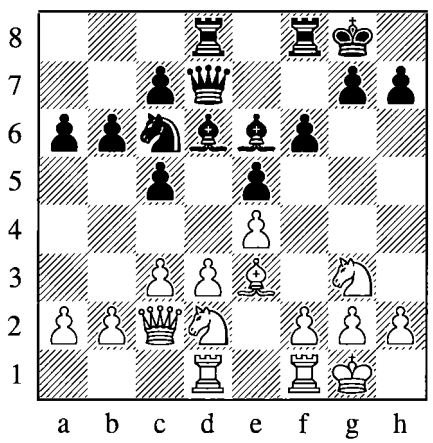
A continuation that gives the game a "closed" character. The struggle now enters a manoeuvring phase which lasts for 30 moves, no more and no less. During this lengthy period the players "succeed" in carrying out one solitary pawn exchange. Such a manoeuvring process demands a great deal of patience from both opponents. The player whose patience eventually ran out was White, in other words the one who had been guilty of steering the game into a manoeuvring channel in the first place. "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

Was White forced into making this last move? Of course not. He could have played 6.d4 exd4 7.♕xd4 ♕xd4 8.♘xd4, when the position assumes an open character. But then, an early exchange of queens is not to everyone's taste. The main point is that White *was* counting on opening the centre by playing d3-d4 or f2-f4 in the near future, but he didn't anticipate that his opponent would stop this plan from being implemented – and that he would then have to keep manoeuvring until the end of the game.

6...♗d6 7.♗e3 c5 8.♘e2 ♘e7 9.♘g3

White reconciles himself to the necessity of manoeuvring. The purpose of his last move is to be fully armed to meet Black's possible ...f5. The point e4 would then fall into White's hands, and one of his knights would comfortably settle there.

9...♗e6 10.c3 ♕d7 11.0–0 0–0 12.♕c2 ♘c6 13.♘d2 ♖ad8 14.♖ad1 b6



15.f3

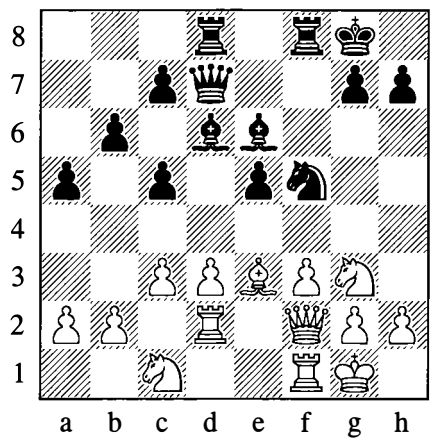
The d3-d4 advance is prevented, and for this reason the weakness of the d3-pawn, on the file dominated by Black's major pieces, is very palpable. The best testimony to this is the fact that 15.f4 is now unplayable, since after exchanges on f4 White's centre pawn would be lost. As a result White is forced into a game of waiting and manoeuvring, though

his manoeuvring is not aimless. As already mentioned, he concentrates his force on the e4 point, in anticipation of Black's ...f5. Interestingly, even after that move occurs, the struggle will retain its manoeuvring character.

15...♗e7 16.♘b3 a5 17.♘c1 ♗d6 18.♕f2 ♘e7 19.♖d2 f5

Risky, but other ways to enliven the struggle are not to be found. Black reckons that the initiative is on his side but that he cannot make anything of it except by pushing his f-pawn. White too can now see some bright lights appearing, in the shape of Black's isolated e5-pawn and one of the commanding heights of the centre – the point e4.

20.exf5 ♘xf5



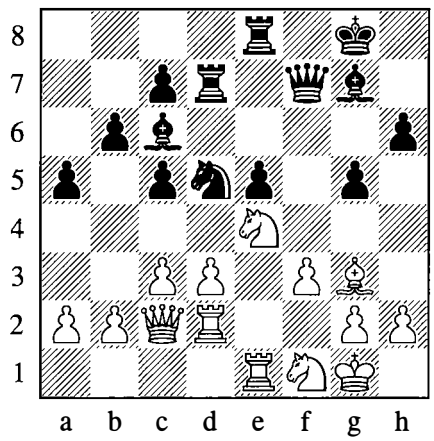
21.♘e4

Exchanging knights would be worth considering if White could quickly bring his *other* knight to e4, but this is not so simple to achieve. For example 21.♘xf5 ♗xf5 22.♘e2 e4! 23.dxe4 ♗xe4 24.♗f4! ♗b7 25.♖fd1 ♕e6 26.♗xd6 ♖xd6 and Black has a good game, seeing that after 27.♖xd6 cxd6 the advance ...d5 can hardly be stopped, while in addition Black threatens ...♕xa2.

21...h6 22.♕e1 ♗e7 23.♗f2 ♗d5 24.♕e2 ♖fe8 25.♖dd1 ♕e6 26.♖fe1 ♗f8 27.♕c2 ♕f7 28.♖d2 ♖e6 29.♖de2 ♖de8 30.♕a4

A typical contribution to the game of waiting and manoeuvring; in itself the move is hard to understand.

30...♘e7 31.♗g3 ♗c6 32.♕c2 ♘d5 33.♘b3 g5 34.♘d2 ♗g7 35.♘f1 ♖6e7 36.♖d2 ♖d7



And now, worn out by the manoeuvring – a monotonous process, and in this case also a barren one – White overlooked the loss of a pawn.

37.♘e3?

37.a3 ought to have been played.

37...♘xe3 38.♖xe3 ♕xa2
...0–1

It is the creative processes of the chess art that particularly suffer when the manoeuvring turns out to be a form of voluntary temporizing, idleness, and sometimes even the repudiation of any struggle.

Although such cases are comparatively rare in the practice of our own masters and grandmasters – who have proclaimed themselves to the whole of the chess world as the torchbearers of a combative, energetic, enterprising style – we will nonetheless give

one such example, in the hope that it will find no imitators among the readers of this book.

Y. Averbakh – T. Petrosian

Caro-Kann Defence
19th USSR Championship, Moscow 1951

1.e4 c6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♘f3 ♗g4 4.h3 ♗xf3 5.♕xf3 ♘f6 6.d3 e6

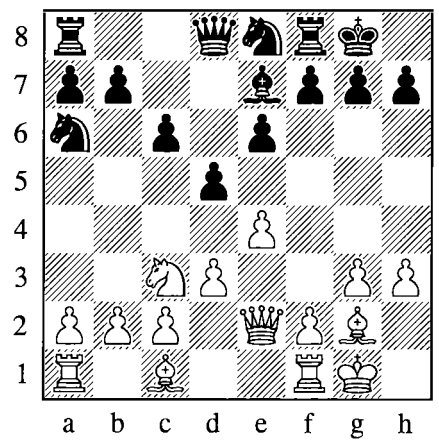
The position starts to take on the features of a closed game. This is the first prerequisite for switching to a manoeuvring track.

7.g3

Very slow, although in practice this has occurred more than once.

In the first game of the 1958 World Championship match between Smyslov and Botvinnik, White played 7.♗e2; but with that continuation the game began putting on the face of a manoeuvring struggle without exchanges.

7...♗e7 8.♗g2 0–0 9.0–0 ♘a6 10.♕e2 ♘e8



11.e5

This moment in the game is highly instructive. It shows that the processes of manoeuvring are by no means always initiated accidentally or brought about by a conjunction of circumstances independent of the will of the players. Far from it. A manoeuvring game can also sometimes arise from the conscious efforts of one of the opponents. Whatever may be the reason for such efforts, from the creative point of view they cannot be justified.

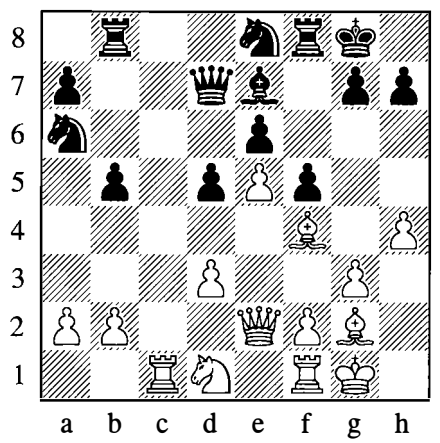
Instead of closing the position, leading automatically to a game of manoeuvring, White had at his disposal an active plan for attacking in the centre: 11.d4, to be followed by ♗e3, ♖ad1 and f2-f4. Black can hardly accept the pawn sacrifice with 11...dxe4 12.♘xe4! ♕xd4. After 13.♖d1 ♕b6 14.♖d7 ♗f6 15.c3, White threatens ♗e3, not only recovering the pawn but gaining positional superiority.

11...♘ac7 12.h4 b5 13.♘d1 ♕d7 14.c4 f5

Why not 14...f6, if Black has no objection to the exf6 exchange?

15.♗f4 ♖b8 16.♖c1 ♘a6 17.cxd5 cxd5

The last exchange in this game!



18.d4

White unjustifiably refrains from the manoeuvre ♘d1-c3-b1-d2-b3, which would give him chances to take the initiative.

Something like the following might occur: 18.♘c3 ♘ec7 19.♘b1 ♖fc8 20.♘d2 b4

21.♘b3 ♘b5 22.♗e3 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖c8 24.♖xc8† ♕xc8 25.d4 ♕c6 26.♗f1 ♘ac7 27.h5 and then g3-g4, opening up a field of action for the light-squared bishop.

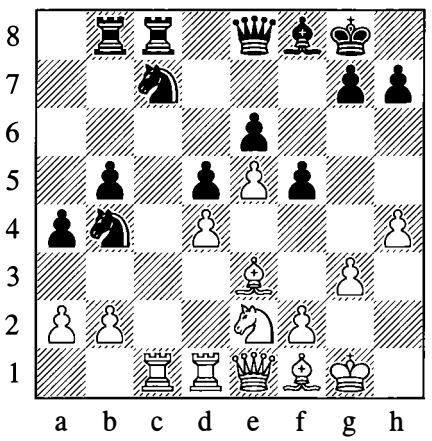
18...♘b4 19.♘c3

19.a3 would be a wrong in view of 19...♘c6! 20.♕d3 ♘a5.

19...♘c7 20.♕d2 ♖fc8 21.♗g5

Nothing comes of this either. White could have played 21.h5 h6 22.♗f3, followed by ♔h2, ♖g1 and g3-g4, but he carries on manoeuvring.

21...♗f8 22.♗h3 ♕f7 23.♖fd1 ♕e8 24.♗f1 a5 25.♗e3 a4 26.♕e1 ♘c6 27.♘e2 ♘b4 28.♘c3 ♘c6 29.♘e2 ♘b4



A draw was now agreed!
½–½

The chess struggle takes on a wholly different character when the play is full of initiative and enterprise.

We have used the word "initiative" several times already in the pages of this book. The Latin word *initium* means a beginning, an entering upon something. Initiative in life is a display of activity in any human sphere. Initiative is born, exercised and developed as a result of the deliberate efforts of individual or collective thinking. In the chess struggle too, the initiative is a manifestation of deliberate activity, aimed at creating direct threats to the opponent, cramping his position, restricting his forces' mobility and his overall possibilities.

In the main, the initiative in a chess game is held by one of the opponents, but there are some situations where one player's initiative is confronted by a counter-initiative, particularly when the players are attacking on opposite wings. Quite often, an initiative happens to be temporary – it evaporates or is wrested by the other side.

Various categories of initiative can be distinguished according to their scope. An initiative may be slight, stable, lasting, dangerous, powerful, and so on. It is sometimes said that the initiative grows into an attack. This is inaccurate. An attack is a direct assault. The initiative is often accompanied by threats and acts of aggression, but if an attack is always an initiative, the initiative cannot in all cases be equated with an attack. In the Alekhine – Yates game, for example, White held the initiative over a stretch of forty moves that embraced the entire manoeuvring process – but he obtained an attack only at the end of the game, after g4-g5, when he began assailing the pawns on f6 and f7 and creating mate threats. Therefore to say that the initiative turns into an attack is about the same as speaking of a transition of boldness to bravery, timidity to cowardice, laughter to scoffing, and so on.

At the start of the game, thanks to the right of the first move, White possesses a slight initiative (after, say, 1.d4, Black is denied the reply 1...e5). If in the opening Black succeeds in neutralizing this insignificant initiative, we like to think that he is equalizing the game, although the term "equalizing" in this context is decidedly relative.

The opening may happen to develop

symmetrically. We sometimes observe this, for example, in the Four Knights Game, in the Exchange Variation of the French Defence, in the Giuoco Piano and even in the Queen's Gambit.

Most often, in symmetrical systems White succeeds in obtaining a slight initiative, again thanks to the right of moving first.

Seizing the initiative is a distinct creative achievement; the degree of advantage depends on the nature and strength of the initiative.

Quite apart from the purely objective advantages of holding it, we can safely say that the initiative boosts a player's imaginative faculties – it stimulates a more intense working of his thought and fantasy, it generates confidence in his own powers. Conversely, the need to face up to the opponent's initiative quite often has a baneful psychological effect – it negatively affects the quality of play, the staunchness of the defence; it sometimes causes demoralization. It is no accident that a sizable proportion of errors and oversights can be ascribed to players who have fallen under the influence of their opponents' initiative.

The following two games can serve as good illustrations of what has been said.

Ab. Khasin – I. Boleslavsky

Sicilian Defence
23rd USSR Championship, Leningrad 1956

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗c4 e6

White has a slight initiative.

In the event of 6...g6, he exchanges with 7.♘xc6 bxc6 and then carries out the e4-e5 thrust, seeing that 8...dxe5 is unplayable in view of 9.♗xf7†.

7.0–0 ♗e7 8.♗e3 0–0 9.♕e2

White is better developed and frees a square in the centre for a rook, opposite the enemy queen. From here the rook will conveniently sustain the pressure in the centre. This sensible idea makes it a good deal more difficult for Black to solve his opening problems of nullifying White's initiative or even, in the right circumstances, seizing it for himself.

9...a6 10.♖ad1

Threatening ♘xc6 followed by e4-e5.

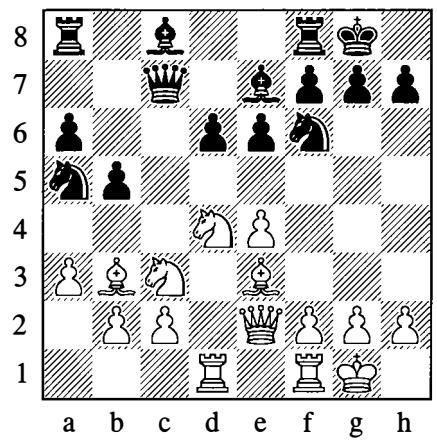
10...♕c7 11.♗b3

At this point 11.a4 would have been useful.

11...b5 12.a3

A flabby move! White stops Black from playing ...b4 to attack the knight which is guarding the e4-pawn. That pawn is indeed a mainstay of White's initiative, and he should therefore have protected it with 12.f3.

12...♘a5



13.f4

Bold and interesting play. True, Boleslavsky himself comments: "A risky move! White noticeably weakens e4, and Black's subsequent play will be designed to conquer this point. A more cautious choice would be 13.f3, renouncing the fight for the initiative but

keeping a solid position." Yet in the fight for the initiative, risks are sometimes worth taking – especially when you consider that renouncing that fight means making concessions not only on the board but in psychological terms.

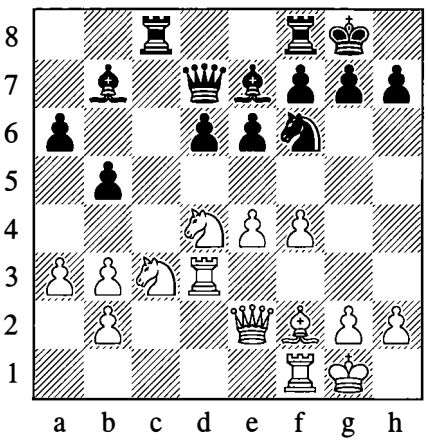
13...♗b7 14.♗f2 ♘xb3 15.cxb3 ♖ac8 16.♖d3

The bold 16.g4 may look like the consistent continuation, aiming to answer 16...♕d7 with 17.g5.

However, Black does better to continue 16...d5 17.e5 ♘e4 18.♘xe4 dxe4, leading to a sharp situation in which Black's position is to be preferred.

16...♕d7

This outwardly inconspicuous manoeuvre sets up the threat of an exchange sacrifice with ...♖xc3. Khasin doesn't notice the threat or considers it innocuous.



17.♖h3?

A mistake that allows Black to wrest the initiative from his opponent.

Instead White could have fought for the initiative with 17.e5 ♘d5 18.♘xd5 ♗xd5 19.♘f5!, when he would be threatening an exchange sacrifice of his own – 20.♖xd5 exd5 21.♕g4, and wins. Black's best defence would be 19...exf5 20.♖xd5 ♕e6!, and if 21.♖fd1 then 21...f6, reaching a balanced position. It would be hard for White to make use of the more active placing of his pieces in the centre, and Black would succeed in ridding himself of the d6 weakness.

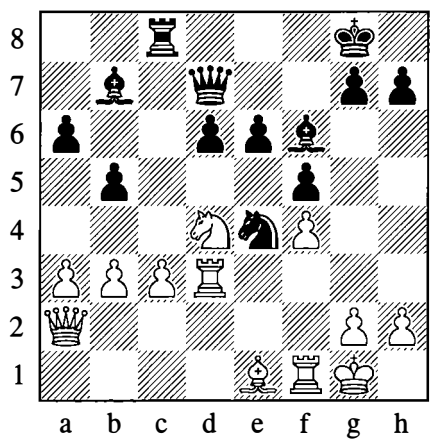
17...♖xc3

Seizing the initiative for a relatively cheap price. What is most interesting is that Black was, strictly speaking, forced to go in for this operation that benefits him. White was threatening to play e4-e5 and then penetrate to h5 with his queen, regaining the initiative – which this time would be more enduring and dangerous.

18.bxc3

There is no improvement in 18.♖xc3, when Black plays 18...♘xe4 19.♖c2 ♗d8! 20.♘f3 ♘xf2 21.♕xf2 ♗d5 followed by ...♕b7 and ...♗b6.

18...♘xe4 19.♗e1 f5 20.♖d3 ♗f6 21.♕a2 ♖c8



Black's pressure is mounting. He now threatens 22...♘xc3 23.♗xc3 ♖xc3. White can undertake nothing; his opponent's powerfully placed knight in the centre is hampering all his actions.

22.♔h1 h6 23.h3 ♔h7 24.♔h2 g5 25.fxg5 ♗xg5 26.♕e2 ♗f6 27.g3 ♗a8 28.♕h5 ♖g8

White's king has come under a very strong attack; his g-pawn cannot withstand Black's fierce onslaught.

29.♗d2 ♘xd2

Black exchanges his mighty knight, but in return he trains devastating fire on the g3-point.

30.♖xd2 ♗e5 31.♖d3 ♖g5

A more energetic continuation of the attack, indicated by Boleslavsky himself, was 31...♕b7; and if 32.♖g1 or 32.♕e2, then 32...f4.

The immediate 31...f4 would also have won quickly.

32.♕e2 ♕g7 33.♕e1

On 33.♘xe6 Black has 33...♖xg3!.

33...♕g6 34.♘e2 f4 35.♖df3 fxg3† 36.♘xg3 ♗xf3 37.♖xf3 ♖xg3

Black forces a king-and-pawn endgame with a pawn more. This is the simplest way to win.

A decision in the middlegame could have been brought about by 37...h5 38.h4 ♖g4.

38.♖xg3 ♕xg3† 39.♕xg3 ♗xg3† 40.♔xg3 ♔g6 41.♔f4 ♔f6 42.♔e4 ♔g5 43.c4 bxc4 44.b4 ♔f6

0–1

From move 17 on, White was subjugated to the will of his opponent.

G. Stahlberg – A. Alekhine

Nimzo-Indian Defence
Hamburg Olympiad 1930

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕b3

In our own day, White plays 4.e3 in the majority of games. That move can be regarded as the first link in a large-scale plan. White bolsters his centre and accelerates his kingside development; subsequently he tries to induce the exchange ...♗xc3, intending to recapture with the pawn and prepare a powerful central offensive.

A good example of the implementation of such a plan is the well-known game Botvinnik – Capablanca, Holland 1938.

However the move 4.e3 also has a minus side, inasmuch as it impairs the activity of the queen's bishop. Of course we are speaking of a temporary restriction, sometimes even a brief one, but practice has shown that this circumstance can to some extent be exploited by Black; it helps him to place barriers in the way of White's development of his initiative.

At the time when the present game was played, 4.e3 was rarely adopted; preference was given to 4.♕b3, 4.♕c2 and 4.♘f3. In our view, any of these moves holds out just as much promise of initiative as 4.e3.

4...c5 5.dxc5 ♘c6 6.♘f3 ♘e4 7.♗d2 ♘xc5

[Editor's note: Nowadays 7...♘xd2 8.♘xd2 0–0 9.e3 ♗xc5 is more popular.]

8.♕c2 f5 9.a3

There is no hurry for White to unravel the tangle of pieces on the queenside. By continuing 9.g3 b6 10.♗g2 ♗b7 11.0–0 0–0 12.♖ad1, he would hold a slight but clearly defined initiative. However, in the highly "theoretical" line that Stahlberg selects, Black also has to put some diligent effort into surmounting his opening difficulties completely.

9...♗xc3 10.♗xc3 0–0 11.b4

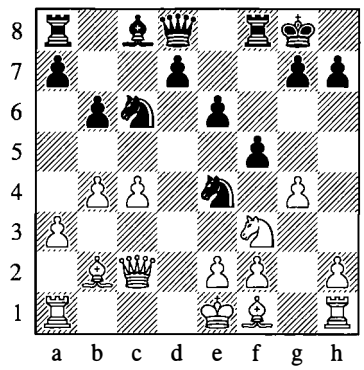
Of course if White plays in a lax manner, Black will continue with ...b6 and ...♗b7, calmly complete his development, and engage in a full-blooded struggle for the initiative.

11...♘e4 12.e3

Perhaps the most "innocent" line, to use an expression that annotators sometimes like.

If Stahlberg didn't want to lose a tempo with 12.♗b2, more chances of keeping the initiative were offered by 12.g3, with a roughly similar continuation to the one given in the note to move 9.

In Stepanov – Romanovsky, Leningrad 1929, White played 12.♗b2, then after 12...b6 he tried out the sharp 13.g4.



Black answered 13...♘xf2!, seized the initiative from his opponent and obtained a counterattack: 14.♔xf2 fxg4 15.♖g1 ♕h4† 16.♔e3 ♕h6† 17.♔d3 gxf3? (The right continuation is 17...d5!, as later played in Botvinnik – Miasoedov, Leningrad 1931.) 18.♖xg7† ♕xg7 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.exf3? (The preliminary 20.♕b2† is correct.) 20...♖xf3† 21.♔e4 d5† 0–1. White resigned in view of 22.cxd5 exd5† 23.♔xd5 ♗e6†! 24.♔d6 ♖d8† 25.♔c7 ♖f7† 26.♔xc6 ♖c8†.

Of course White is not obliged to detonate the position with 13.g4; he can play 13.g3, obtaining a good game.

12...b6 13.♗d3 ♘xc3 14.♕xc3 ♗b7 15.0–0 ♘e7 16.♗e2

The bishop's retreat is not justified, for nothing comes of the play on the d-file that White envisages.

Instead, 16.♘d4 must be recognized as the dynamic continuation.

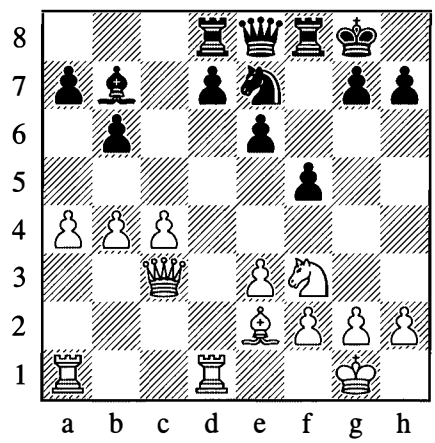
White meets 16...f4 with 17.exf4 ♖xf4 18.♘b5, aiming for occupation of the d6-square.

On 16...♕e8, he can set about transferring his bishop with ♗d3-e2-f3, while at the same time maintaining pressure on the d-file.

16...♕e8 17.♖fd1 ♖d8 18.a4

The further course of the game suggests that Stahlberg has been too optimistic in weighing up his possibilities; he has underestimated his opponent's chances on the kingside and overrated his own on the queenside. This results from thought that lacks concreteness and objectivity.

A useful idea would be to make Black's aggressive bishop harmless by playing 18.♘e5 or 18.♘d4, followed by ♗f3. It would hardly pay Black to answer 18.♘d4 with 18...e5, in view of 19.♘b5, and if 19...♕g6 then 20.f3.



18...f4!?

A far-sighted attempt to grasp the initiative! The move doesn't look very frightening, and Stahlberg may have accorded it no significance or even failed to anticipate it at all. The fight for the initiative characterizes the next phase of the game. The outcome of this fight will

determine the side on which the scales will come down.

19.a5?!

Allowing Black to exchange pawns on e3 means that the knight will arrive on f5 with tempo.

Better 19.exf4 ♖xf4 20.a5, when in the event of 20...♘f5? Black would have to reckon with 21.g3.

19...fxe3 20.♕xe3 ♘f5 21.♕c3 d6 22.axb6 axb6 23.♘e1?

Very passive. After 23.♖a7 ♖d7 24.♖da1 the fight would be in full swing, whereas now it shifts in Black's favour.

23...e5 24.♖a7

On 24.♗f3 Black plays 24...♘d4! just the same.

24...♘d4 25.♕e3 ♖d7

Threatening ...♘xe2† followed by ...♗f3.

26.♖a2 ♖df7 27.f3 ♖f4 28.♗d3 ♕h5 29.♗f1?

The position of the bishop on f1 has tactical disadvantages which the game continuation reveals. With 29.♖f2 ♕g5 30.♖a1, White would still have chances to resist successfully.

29...♕g5

Threat after threat is now springing up (the present one is ...♖xf3), with all Black's forces harmoniously bearing down on the f3 point; its fall should bring about an immediate catastrophe.

30.♖f2 h6!

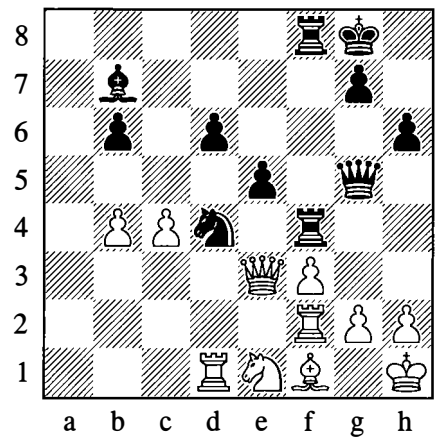
Renewing the threat of 31...♖xf3 (32.♕xg5 ♖xf2).

31.♔h1

This loses at once.

In answer to 31.♕d2, which he considered the best defence, Alekhine indicated the decisive continuation: 31...♗xf3 32.♘xf3 ♘xf3† 33.♖xf3 ♖xf3 34.♕xg5 ♖xf1† 35.♖xf1 ♖xf1† 36.♔xf1 hxg5 37.♔e2 ♔f7 38.♔f3 ♔e6 39.♔e4 b5!

However, it still wasn't too late to remove the bishop from the fateful square, by 31.♗d3.



31...♖xf3
0–1

An interesting game, in which the role of the initiative stands out very sharply. During the first 10 moves White maintained a slight opening initiative fairly securely. It started to fade after 12.e3, and petered out altogether after 16.♗e2. From that moment on, Black fought to seize the initiative for himself. He succeeded in doing so as a result of White's error on move 23.

Black's initiative began to increase in a "crescendo" and quickly attained the force of a decisive attack which achieved its aim within the space of eight moves. It remains to note the exceptionally harmonious activity of all the black pieces in the final assault. The initiative is a symbol of creative life in chess. The initiative is the enemy of passivity, inertia, a waiting game of manoeuvre, and placid

contemplation. That is why in every period of the chess struggle, defending or attacking, repelling blows or dealing them, in moments of grave ordeals or the triumph of our ideas, we must remember the immutable motto: "Seek the initiative!" This should always and everywhere be the motto that accompanies and inspires our creative thinking.

Chapter 8

The Two Bishops

It is common knowledge that the relative strength of a piece is a variable quantity which increases or decreases depending on the placing of the other pieces and the dynamics of the position.

A rook and a bishop on open lines, a knight established on a weak square – all these are factors that enhance the pieces' effective power. A "permanent knight" is such a formidable force that for the most part it will compensate for the loss of the exchange. The constant questions asked by amateurs as to which is stronger, the knight or the bishop, meet with stereotyped answers: the bishop is stronger in some positions, the knight is in others. Everything depends on what pawn material there is on the board, and what its structure is; and above all, what positions are occupied by the pieces whose strengths are being compared. It goes without saying that the location of *other* pieces must also be taken into account.

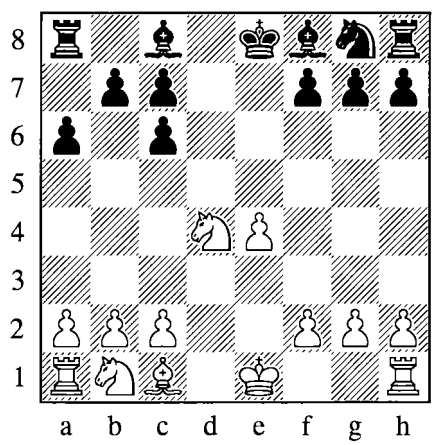
Among the pieces that may noticeably gain in strength depending on the peculiarities of the position and the harmony of their actions, the pair of bishops began to attract special attention from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.

In a number of games, given the appropriate positional circumstances, the two bishops were able to prove themselves as a fearsome fighting force, exceeding the strength of a different pair of minor pieces and sometimes even that of a minor piece and rook.

Steinitz, the founder of the positional doctrine, was clearly impressed by the effectiveness of two bishops acting in harmony, and he referred to such activity as "the advantage of the bishop pair". Among his later followers, the strength of the two bishops was elevated into a peculiar form of cult and virtually became a fetish. The bishop pair was proclaimed as a specific material force, and was adduced as an independent factor in the evaluation of chess positions.

Take for example the position in the Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez resulting from:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.d4 exd4 6.♕xd4 ♕xd4 7.♘xd4

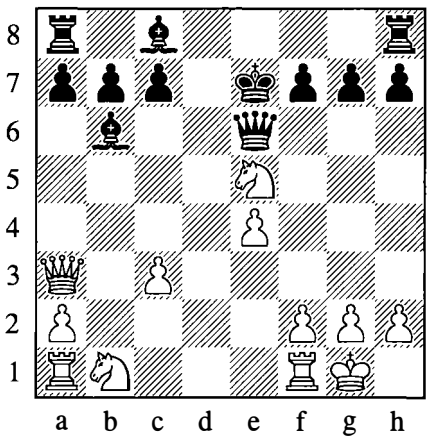


Some theorists, authors of chess books and practical commentators have assessed the above position in terms which, in brief, go like this: "White has an extra pawn on the kingside while his opponent has a doubled pawn on the queenside; but the development of Black's pieces is no worse and perhaps even superior, and he has the two bishops." Here as in many other judgements, the two bishops figure as an abstract positional factor, representing a special type of advantage.

The first to oppose this view resolutely was Chigorin. His opinions on the matter were most fully expounded in a polemic with Emanuel Lasker prompted by the appearance, in 1896, of the World Champion's brochure *Common Sense in Chess* – such was the audacious title attached by Lasker to a collection of twelve lectures that he had given to an audience of London chess players. This is not the place to judge the merits and failings of that pretentious work which nonetheless definitely deserves attention. We are mentioning it purely in connection with one position which gave rise to the dispute between Lasker and Chigorin, over the question of the two bishops that interests us.

In his fourth lecture Lasker selected an opening – the Evans Gambit – as the theme for discussion. In particular, he cited the following variation:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.b4 ♗xb4 5.c3 ♗a5 6.d4 d6 7.0–0 ♗b6 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♕b3 ♕f6 10.♗d5 ♘ge7 11.♗g5 ♕g6 12.♗xe7 ♔xe7 13.♗xc6 ♕xc6 14.♘xe5 ♕e6 15.♕a3†



After the possible replies 15...♔f6 or 15...c5, Lasker assessed the situation in Black's favour because – in his words – Black has "two bishops, a healthy development of forces and a solid position".

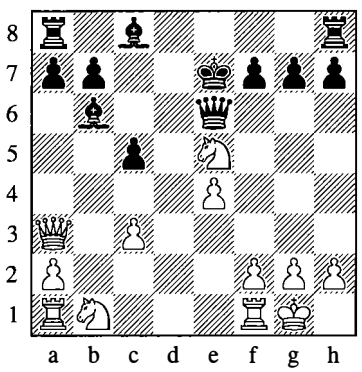
Concerning this judgement, we will quote Chigorin's rejoinder (published in the chess column of the *New Time* newspaper, 30 January 1897):

> In pointing to the two bishops, Mr Lasker of course gives us to understand that the two bishops are superior in strength to the two knights. This means – if we also take into account his fine development and his "solid" position – that the player with the black pieces has a substantial advantage over his opponent, and every chance of winning. However, Mr Lasker's assessment of the situation is in my view wholly subjective, and will scarcely be borne out in practice. Not being supported by even a superficial analysis of the position, it explains nothing to the amateurs, who will be more interested in this question: By what means, exactly, will the "strength" of two bishops against two knights assert itself in the present case, and what role will these pieces play?
>
> The key position in Mr Lasker's variation

could come about in a practical game. I therefore took an interest in it and tried investigating it. But my analysis leads to the very opposite conclusions, namely that all the advantages in the position are on White's side. I will scarcely be wrong if I say that this analysis – and practical play – will even prove Black's position to be past saving.

Here are some variations. Mr Lasker considers that by playing ...♔f6 or ...c5 on move 15, Black will have all the advantages he speaks of. If the king goes to f6, White of course withdraws his knight to f3. Then in answer to 16...g6 he plays 17.c4, with a double threat (c5 and ♕b2†). White's answer to 16...♖d8 is also 17.c4 with the same threat, or 17.♘bd2 (17...♖d3 18.♕b2). In the event of 16...♗d7 17.♘bd2 ♗c6 18.♘d4, Black's "advantage of the bishop pair" disappears. The position of the black king enables White to launch a direct attack against it.

I investigated the position after 15...c5 in greater detail.



In this position White plays 16.f4!. Then after c3-c4 and ♘c3 this knight will occupy a really strong post on d5, from which Black can remove it only by capturing it with a stronger piece.

16.f4

I could not find any good moves for Black to develop his forces. In the event of 16...f6 17.♘f3, followed by f4-f5, c3-c4 (which Black can only temporarily prevent by withdrawing his queen to f7) and ♘b1-c3-d5, White will undoubtedly be in a good position.

On 16...♗d7, White can immediately deprive Black of that powerful weapon which Mr Lasker thinks he possesses; but in my opinion White does better to pursue his plan with c3-c4, ♘b1-c3 etc.

If instead Black moves his king or queen or any of the pawns, White can carry out his plan almost unmodified – as he also can against 16...♖d8. It is the consequences of the latter move that I shall chiefly examine.

16...♖d8 17.c4

As I have said, White can obtain a splendid position after ♘f3 and f4-f5 or ♘bd2 etc., but I wish to demonstrate some lines in which the strength of the knight posted on d5 is clearly displayed.

17...f6 18.♘c3 fxe5 19.♘d5† ♔f8

Black obviously cannot save the game by sacrificing rook for knight. After 19...♖xd5 20.exd5, queen moves are met by 21.fxe5 followed by e5-e6.

If the king goes to e8, there follows: 20.♖ab1! ♗d7 (20...♖b8 21.♖xb6!; White's next move renews this same threat) 21.♕g3 ♕g6 22.♕h4 ♕f7 (or 22...♔f8) 23.fxe5, and White wins the queen.

20.♖ab1!

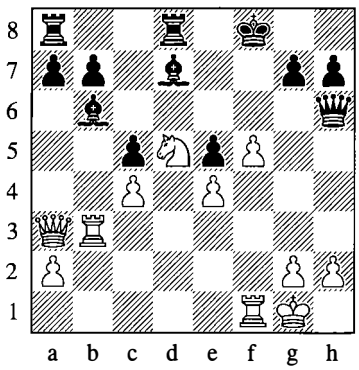
White induces ...♖b8 or ...♗d7, to deprive Black of the possibility of taking the knight with his rook at a suitable moment; for example, 20...♖b8 21.f5 ♕h6

(21...♕d6 22.f6 g6 23.♕e3, and wins) 22.f6 ♖xd5 23.exd5 gxf6 24.♖xb6 axb6 25.♕a7 (25...♕e3† 26.♔h1 ♕e2 27.♖c1 ♕d2 28.♖g1) and White should win.

20...♗d7 21.f5 ♕h6

Now in all probability White can continue 22.f6 with success, but the attack with 22.♖b3 is more effective.

22.♖b3



The following variations indicate that Black has no defence. This goes to show that the bishops between them are incapable of playing an active part in defending the king from attacks with one knight.

a) 22...♔g8 23.♖h3 ♕g5 24.♖g3 ♕h6 25.f6 g6 26.♕c3, and now:

a1) 26...♕h5 27.f7† ♔h8 (or 27...♔f8 28.♘f6 ♕h6 29.♕xe5 ♗c6 30.♖h3, winning) 28.♘f6 ♕h6 29.♘xd7 ♖xd7 30.♕xe5† and mate in two more moves.

a2) 26...♗e6 27.f7† ♗xf7 28.♘e7(f6)† ♔f8 29.♖gf3 or 29.♖h3, and White ought to win.

b) 22...♕d2 23.♖d3 ♕e2 (or 23...♕a5 24.♕c1, threatening f5-f6 or ♖a3) 24.f6 g6 25.♕c1 ♕h5 26.♘xb6 axb6 27.♕d2 ♔e8 28.♖d1, and wins.

The variations I have given do not of course exhaust all the means of defence. Black could offer more resistance by refraining from ...f6, but in that case both white knights would occupy commanding positions on d5 and e5. In the event of an exchange of bishop for knight on d5, White's passed pawn in the centre, with the support of the other pawns, would acquire great significance. *It follows that the advantage of one side or the other lies not in the two bishops or knights as such, but in the position they occupy, or may occupy, in association with the other pieces.* (My emphasis – P. Romanovsky.)

Chigorin's view, supported by fairly convincing analysis, is plain: the "advantage of the bishop pair", without reference to the position, does not exist.

It should be added that in practice even the "bishop fans" themselves would quite often deviate from their own principles. The Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez, in which White concedes the "advantage of the bishop pair" to his opponent right from the first moves of the opening, was employed many times by Lasker himself, with consistent success. And although his opponents were such distinguished players as Tarrasch, Janowski, Capablanca and others – the first two of whom were noted "two bishop specialists" into the bargain – even they were not successful in pitting the power of the bishops against Lasker's extra pawn on the kingside.

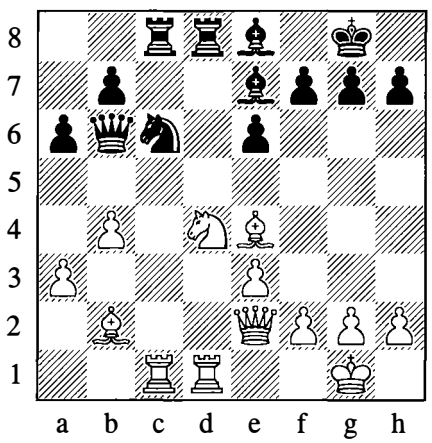
Nevertheless in our own time, alongside the adherents of Chigorin's view, there are still plenty of prominent chess players who side with Steinitz and Lasker and hold that two bishops against a different pair of minor pieces constitute a positional advantage in their own right.

We have already mentioned that the "theory" of the advantage of the bishop pair was inspired by positions where two bishops, working in

co-operation, displayed strength considerably exceeding the combative scope of a different pair of minor pieces. But then, to set beside such positions, there are plenty of others in which the bishops are powerless against a bishop and knight or even two knights. That is our first point. The second is that if we undertake an impartial scrutiny of positions where the bishops, acting harmoniously, gain disproportionately in strength, we find that this stems not from any magical power supposedly inherent in the bishop pair but from the favourable amalgamation of a number of positional factors.

E. Bogoljubow – D. Janowski

New York 1924



19.♕f3 ♘e5!?

Giving up a pawn. Alekhine's comment on this move is not without interest: "The sacrifice of a pawn to obtain two bishops against bishop and knight is one of Janowski's favourite tactical devices." Janowski did indeed like handling the bishop pair, but there is no doubt that the sacrifice was prompted by more concrete motives.

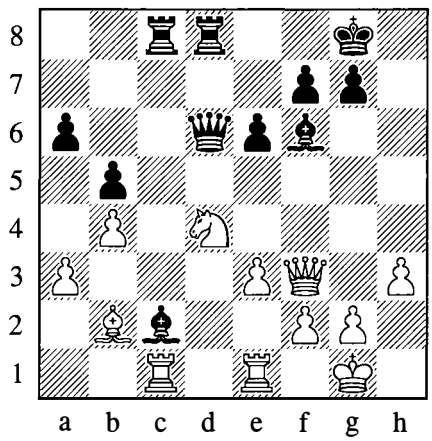
20.♗xh7†

Winning a pawn and doing damage to the enemy king's position at the same time – few players would refrain from this. But actually White has no other choice, as the queen has nowhere convenient to go: e2 is where it has just come from, 20.♕h5 loses a piece to 20...f5, and after 20.♕h3 ♘g6 the queen will be out of the action.

20...♔xh7 21.♕h5† ♔g8 22.♕xe5 ♗f6 23.♕h5 ♗a4 24.♖e1

Exchanging all the rooks would allow Black to achieve victory: 24.♖xc8 ♖xc8 25.♖c1? (the right move is 25.♖d2, with approximate equality) 25...♖xc1† 26.♗xc1 e5 27.♘f5 ♕c6 28.♗d2 ♕c2 29.♗e1 ♕b1 and White loses a piece.

24...♕d6 25.h3 ♗c2 26.♕f3 b5



Black dominates the light-square territory of the board. This is what Janowski sacrificed his pawn for.

However, Black's activity is at best sufficient for equality, as the continuation 27.♗a1 eloquently testifies. If the bishop leaves c2, White gains a won position with 28.♘c6. Black therefore has to exchange on d4 and trust in obtaining a draw thanks to the opposite-coloured bishops.

27.♕e2 ♗a4 28.♕f3

Not 28.♘f3 (on which White may perhaps have been counting), in view of 28...♖xc1 29.♖xc1 ♗d1, winning the bishop on b2. By returning his queen to f3 White tacitly offers a draw, but his offer naturally meets with no response.

28...♖c4 29.♗a1?

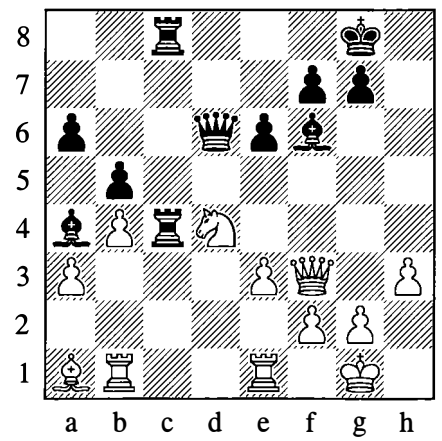
White unjustifiably refrains from exchanging on c4; the resulting passed pawn could have been successfully blockaded by the bishop.

29...♖dc8

Black misses the chance to gain a tangible plus with 29...e5, after which his bishop would penetrate to d1 and his queen to d2 – as in the actual game.

30.♖b1

It is clear by now that Bogoljubow's misfortune stems from the impossibility of guarding the light squares. His pawns are arranged on dark squares, while his light-squared bishop has been exchanged.



30...e5

Alekhine rightly points out that this move is inaccurate. White could now reply 31.♕g3 and meet 31...♕d7 with 32.♘f3, complicating the struggle. It is notable that any thoughts about the strength of the bishop pair – which Black still possesses – have no place here.

31.♘e2?! ♗c2 32.♖bc1 ♗e4 33.♕g4 ♗b7

The light-squared bishop is doing wonderful work. Its perambulation across the squares e8-a4-c2-a4-c2-e4-b7 has given White a great deal of trouble. Finally this bishop takes up a menacing post on the long diagonal, with the intention of dealing a decisive blow to the enemy king at the appropriate moment. But we are speaking of a bishop, not bishops. The "advantage of the bishop pair" has nothing to do with it.

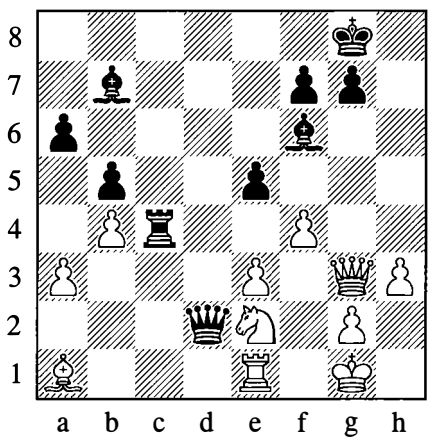
34.♖xc4?

A mistake that leads to a lost position. The black queen now becomes too active. Before exchanging on c4 it was imperative to insert 34.♖ed1, maintaining the balance.

34...♖xc4 35.f4

Now a new "hole" appears on e4, but there is no way out for White. The variations 35.♕h5 g6, or 35.♕f5 ♗e4, or 35.♕g3 ♕d2, are all bad.

35...♕d2 36.♕g3



36...♖e4?

Black could already win a piece with: 36...exf4 37.♘xf4 ♗xa1 (37...♖c1 also wins) 38.♖xa1 ♖xf4! 39.exf4 (39.♕xf4 ♕xg2#) 39...♕d4†

37.♗c3 ♕d5 38.♗xe5?

Thanks to Black's slip-up on move 36, White could have got back into the game with 38.♕f3.

38...♖xe3 39.♕g4 ♗xe5

This bishop has stayed on f6 all through the game, and is now exchanged without having caused White any serious trouble, properly speaking. It has all been a matter of one bishop, not two.

40.fxe5 ♖xe5 41.♔h2

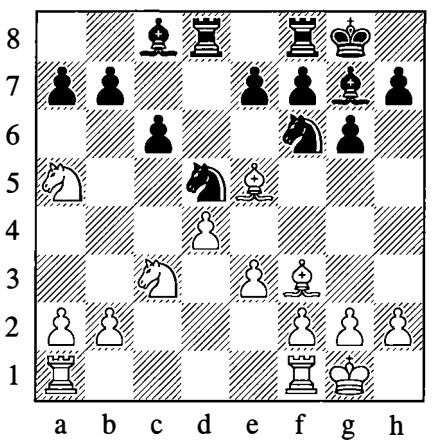
Aiming to answer 41...♖g5 with 42.♘f4.

41...♕d2 42.♕g3 f6 43.h4 ♗d5 44.♕f2 ♗c4 0–1

The light-squared bishop was indeed punching above its weight, but the same can hardly be said of the dark-squared one! Admittedly, to some extent it restricted the manoeuvres of White's pieces, notably the knight on d4 – yet its strength in no way exceeded the norm and perhaps even fell below it.

A. Kotov – I. Kashdan

USSR – USA radio match 1945



White's bishops are well placed – better, undoubtedly, than those of his opponent. Yet it would not enter anyone's head to assert that White had the advantage of the two bishops. Why? Because, of course, Black has two bishops of his own. This means that we may speak of "the advantage of the two bishops" only when the bishops are opposing any pieces *other* than two bishops. There is scant logic in this.

The position shown in the diagram was not original. It had occurred for the first time in Capablanca – Flohr, Semmering 1927.

17...h5

Flohr played 17...e6.

18.h3 ♘h7 19.♗h2

A better idea was 19.♘xd5 cxd5 20.♗f4 or 20.h4, with subsequent play in the c-file.

19...♘g5 20.♗d1 c5 21.♗b3 ♘xc3 22.bxc3 b6

This is the only way Black can develop his bishop.

There is no use in 22...♘e4 (with the threats of ...♘xc3 and ...♘d2), in view of 23.♖fc1, when White is only strengthening his position on the queenside while the knight's position on e4 is insecure.

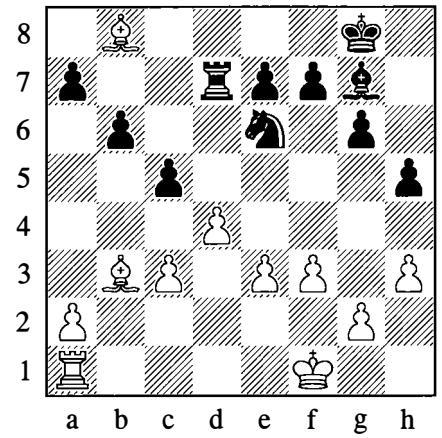
23.♘c6 ♖d7 24.f3 ♗a6

Better 24...♗b7, intending only after 25.♘e5 ♗xe5 26.♗xe5 to play 26...♗a6; but in that case too, with 27.♖fc1, White retains an undisputed plus. He has a preponderance in the centre and a compact pawn chain; his dark-squared bishop is also very well placed, possessing a wide field of action.

25.♘b8 ♖xb8

Essential; not 25...♗xf1 26.♘xd7 ♖d8 27.♘xb6 ♗xg2 28.♔xg2 axb6 29.♗c7.

26.♗xb8 ♗xf1 27.♔xf1 ♘e6



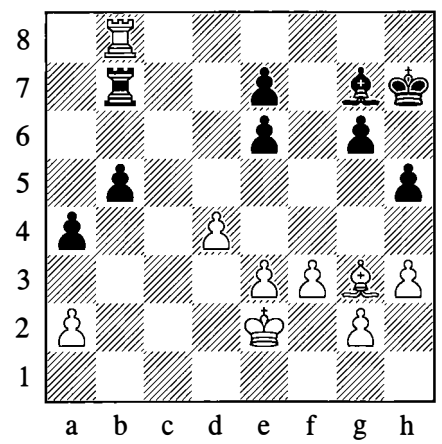
In this position White's two bishops are indeed performing excellently, sweeping the centre with their crossfire and supporting an advance of the centre pawns. But does this circumstance result from that celebrated "advantage of the two bishops"? No, repeat *no*. Essentially, the power of the bishops results from the poor placing of the enemy pieces.

28.♖b1 cxd4

Sooner or later White would force this exchange by threatening to open the b-file; Black's position is unsatisfactory.

29.cxd4 ♖b7 30.♗g3 b5 31.♖c1 a5 32.♖c8† ♔h7 33.♔e2 a4 34.♗xe6 fxe6 35.♖b8

So Black's defeat is brought about not by White's bishop pair, which is no longer on the board, but by the frightful situation of his own bishop on g7.



35...♖xb8 36.♗xb8 b4

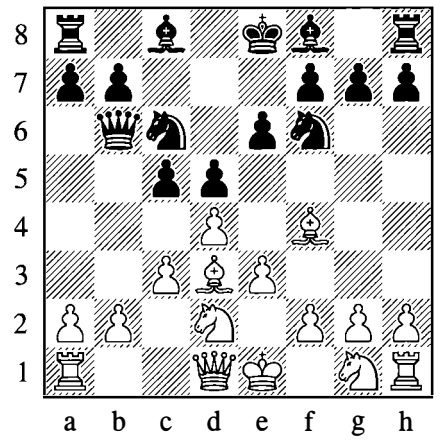
Threatening even to win by ...b3.

37.♔d3 ♗h6 38.f4 g5 39.g4 hxg4 40.hxg4 gxf4 41.exf4
1–0

S. Alapin – A. Burn

Queen's Pawn Opening
Carlsbad 1911

1.d4 d5 2.c3 e6 3.♗f4 c5 4.e3 ♘c6 5.♘d2 ♘f6 6.♗d3 ♕b6



7.♖b1

Apparently the "wisest" solution to White's problem. Let us try to follow his train of thought. The pawn, of course, has to be defended.

If White plays 7.♕c1 or 7.♕c2, then later, after ...♗d7 and ...♖c8, his queen will come under the influence of the hostile rook.

It remains to consider 7.♕b3. In general terms this move is playable, but White will have to endure his opponent's slight but distinct initiative on the queenside after 7...c4 8.♕xb6 axb6 9.♗e2 b5, followed by ...b4. The traditional reaction to this, in the shape of e3-e4,

is of little effect in the present circumstances; Black's play on the wing develops faster, and moreover the advance of White's e-pawn lacks a clear, specific purpose.

This is why White plays 7.♖b1, while the queen, according to his plan, is destined for a different function – on the kingside, supporting active operations there.

7...♗d7 8.♗g3

A fanciful idea enters Alapin's head. He aims to set up a Stonewall structure – which is vulnerable even in its usual version, and wholly unwarranted here.

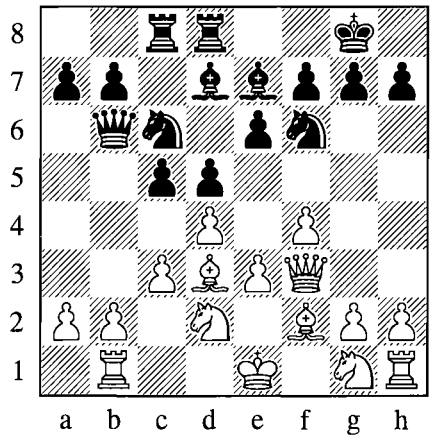
White has everything ready for an invasion of the e5 point, which his bishop is helping control. He should therefore forgo any "sophistry" and continue 8.♘gf3 ♗e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.♘e5. However, Black is excellently developed, and the knight's incursion doesn't yet promise White a serious initiative. For this he has himself to blame, having played the opening unambitiously and allowed his opponent to develop all his forces without the slightest trouble, harmoniously and purposefully. In this light, the plan White actually chooses should be censured perhaps even more strongly.

8...♗e7 9.f4 0–0 10.♗f2

Black can meet 10.♘f3 with 10...♘g4 11.♕e2 (11.♘g5 ♗xg5, or 11...f5) 11...f5, followed by ...♘g4-f6-e4.

10...♖ac8 11.♕f3 ♖fd8

Black has deployed his army in classical style. White has opposed this with an inharmonious "semi-development" of his pieces. His king's knight has not even the prospect of connecting to the centre; he has an unprotected bishop and a weakness on e3 – all this promises nothing good for White. And his king is in the centre for good measure!



12.♘e2 ♗d6

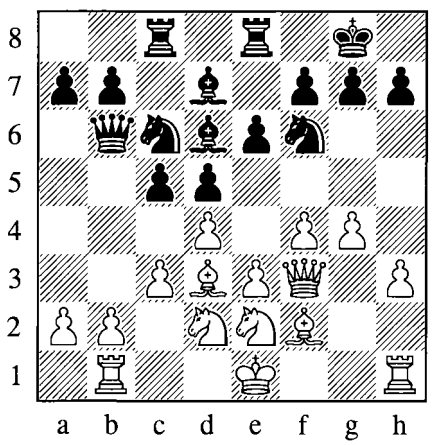
A more logical continuation is 12...cxd4 13.exd4 ♘a5, with ...♗b5 to follow.

13.♗h4 ♗e7 14.♗f2 ♗d6 15.♗h4 ♗e7 16.♗f2 ♗d6 17.h3

Improbable, but true! Without any justification, White declines the draw. Alapin is dreaming of some kind of aggression on the kingside.

17...♖e8 18.g4?!

Played in a state of blissful ignorance! With 18.♗c2 or 18.♗h4, White could prepare for Black's intended attack on the centre.



18...e5!? 19.dxe5

The immediate 19.g5 is unsatisfactory on account of 19...e4 20.♕g2 ♘h5 21.♗c2 cxd4 22.cxd4 ♘b4.

19...♖xe5!

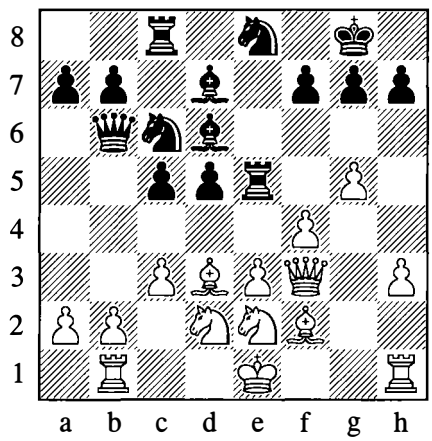
After 19...♗xe5 20.g5 ♘e4 21.♘xe4 (21.fxe5? ♘xe5) 21...dxe4, White must avoid 22.♕xe4 g6 23.fxe5? 23...♘xe5, when the threats of ...♗c6 and ...♗f5 win for Black; however, 22.♗xe4 leaves Black with insufficient compensation for the pawn.

20.g5?

Complex play would result from 20.♘g3 or 20.0–0.

20...♘e8?

Black should have continued in sacrificial vein with 20...♖xg5!. He then has the advantage after either 21.fxg5 ♘e5 or 21.♗h4 ♖g6 22.♗xg6 hxg6.



21.fxe5?

For the exchange Black obtains a strong, not to say winning, attack.

It would be better to decline the sacrifice by playing 21.e4!, with the threat to pick up a whole rook. If 21...dxe4, then 22.♗xe4 ♖e7 23.b4!, and Black's position starts to come apart at the seams.

21...♘xe5 22.♗xh7† ♔xh7 23.♕h5† ♔g8

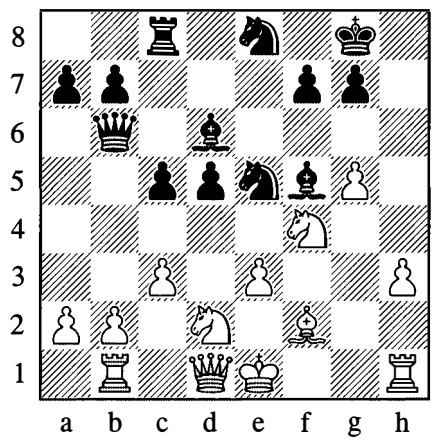
Black threatens ...♗f5.

24.♘f4

Perhaps 24.♘g3 would be rather more logical, but in that case 24...♘d3† maintains a dangerous initiative. White is the exchange up, but the detachments of his army are scattered and his king is wide open; this more than compensates Black for the sacrificed material.

24...♗f5 25.♕d1

Instead 25.♘xd5 ♕a6, with threats of ...♗xb1 and ...♘d3†, would be ruinous for White. Black's light-squared bishop constitutes his chief attacking force, and White is prepared to give up his idle rook for it.



25...♘d3†!

Inspired play, vividly illustrating the relative strength of the pieces. Burn doesn't trade his precious bishop for either the enemy queen's rook or the king's rook.

26.♘xd3 ♗xd3 27.♘f3 c4

Now there is even a good post available on d4 for White's knight, but he has no way to turn it to advantage, while Black's light-squared bishop is established "in perpetuity" on the h7-b1 diagonal.

28.♘d4 ♗e7 29.♕g4 ♘d6?

A considerably stronger move is 29...♖c7; leaving the rook "hanging" on c8 allows White the following defensive resource.

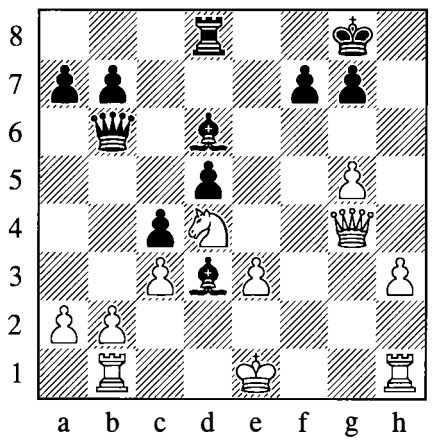
30.♗g3! ♖d8

This is not the best solution either. Black should prefer 30...♖e8 31.♗xd6 ♕xd6. Then in the event of 32.♔d2 ♗xb1 33.♖xb1, he would have the pleasant choice between 33...♕h2† and 33...♕g6.

31.♗xd6

A forced exchange – the rook can't leave b1 in view of ...♕xb2, while 31.♔d2 (or 31.♔f2) would be met by 31...♘e4†. Now, however, Black's dark-squared bishop too acquires great power.

31...♗xd6



Pondering this situation, let us draw attention to the position of the white knight. It has settled on an outpost safe from enemy pawn attacks, on a square located in the centre of the board.

Reasoning abstractly, we may say the knight is occupying a superb post. Yet when once we ask what concrete benefit White can derive from his "superb" knight in the current situation, it immediately becomes clear that there is hardly any benefit at all, other than that of cutting off the black queen from e3.

We are bound to recall Chigorin's words of wisdom to the effect that the strength of a piece is defined not by its location (statics!) but by its concrete prospects of action (dynamics!).

White's sole dynamic chance, which he does indeed try out, lies in pushing the h-pawn, but the forlorn position of his pieces, especially his king, dooms this plan to failure.

32.♔d2 ♗c5 33.h4 ♖e8 34.h5 f5!

An attack prepared by Black's last two moves. White can't play 35.♘xf5 in view of 35...♗xe3† and ...♗xb1.

35.♕f4?

There is no doubt that it was better to play 35.gxf6 ♕xf6 36.♖be1 ♕f2† (36...♕b6? 37.♔c1 ♗a3 38.♖h2) 37.♖e2; by returning the exchange White makes it difficult for Black to launch the decisive attack.

Now, however, the catastrophe quickly ensues, for with the aid of his f-pawn Black can forcibly remove the white king's last remaining cover – the pawn on e3.

35...♗d6 36.♕f2 f4! 37.exf4 ♖e4 38.♖h4 ♗xb1 39.♔c1 ♗d3 40.b4 cxb3 41.axb3 ♕a5 0–1

Can we say that Black was victorious thanks to the "advantage of the two bishops"? Of course not! White lost as a result of the many positional weaknesses in his camp and the open position of his king which was stuck in the centre. We may state with confidence that if an enemy knight had been stationed on d3 instead of the bishop, White would not have saved the game anyway.

Thus, to the question whether possession of the two bishops should count as a special type

of advantage in the assessment of a position, the right answer, in our view, is: no, it should not. Such a special type of advantage does not exist, any more than an advantage of "the two knights", "one knight", "bishop and knight", "the two rooks" and so forth. Like the utilization of a knight on a weak square, an increase in the activity of the bishops is founded on a complex of vulnerable squares or other weaknesses in the position; it depends on the peculiarities of the concrete situation as a whole.

Chapter 9

What is a Combination?

The first edition of this book appeared in 1929. Given the tempestuous pace at which chess thought develops, that is a long time ago. During the intervening period, a good many new strategic and tactical ideas in the chess struggle have seen the light of day. Positional understanding has been deepened. In the field of chess theory – newly ploughed in many places, and refreshed – a wealth of new shoots have appeared.

In presenting this section to the reader, the author has tried to treat the methodical separation between combination and positional play as a purely formal expedient. From the very beginning, it is easy to sense how the elements of positional and combinative play are being emphatically brought together, almost blended into a unified whole. Combination is presented to the reader not only, and perhaps not even predominantly, as a method of action, but chiefly as a significant imaginative phenomenon of the art of chess. Combinations are demonstrated against the background of a unified creative process in the struggle, as an occurrence that inevitably accompanies it – in other words, as a natural course of events and not as a fortuitous "conjuring trick". In this book the study of positional weaknesses is almost always interwoven with combinative motifs, and positional tension is seen as bringing combinative crises to a head; in this respect too, the author emphasizes the unity of the creative process.

Now a few words about the terminology. Many of the terms that the reader will encounter in this section of the book could also be applied systematically and usefully to the study of methods of play geared to positional planning. "Planning", just like "combination", has its motifs, ideas and themes.

In chess circles there is still a tendency to divide styles of play, and hence also players, into positional and combinative.

Either of these "labels", when attached to a player, ought to give offence first and foremost to the player himself, for it merely asserts the limitation and one-sidedness of his chess abilities and thoughts.

You cannot prepare and execute a combination without understanding the laws of positional weaknesses and chess planning; nor can you translate creative plans into reality without having mastered the weapon of combination and without possessing a keen eye for identifying combinative motifs.

Such great masters of chess as Wilhelm Steinitz, Emanuel Lasker, Mikhail Chigorin, Johannes Zukertort, Akiba Rubinstein, Alexander Alekhine and many others (among a multitude of Soviet players we will name Mikhail Botvinnik, Mikhail Tal, Vasily Smyslov and Boris Spassky) are not at all amenable to labels carrying the positional or combinative stamp.

Notwithstanding this, the art of chess perfectly well embraces such things as style and differing schools, and must inevitably do so. Heated arguments and discussions are conducted over the principal creative questions; groups of like-minded thinkers are formed.

It is given to chess players in the course of a game to exhibit numerous traits of the human character. They can play cautiously, riskily, sharply, boldly, experimentally, temperamentally, cunningly, aridly, circumspectly, subtly, ingeniously, and so on and so forth – yet they cannot play positionally or combinatively, inasmuch as both of these elements, which we derive from chess practice, are, we repeat, united in a single creative process. Taking away either element means truncating this process in its most important, its most fundamental aspect.

All players have an excellent idea of what it is that we call a combination in the context of the chess struggle. When it comes to defining it, however, some mainly fruitless and perhaps even baseless disputes are apt to arise.

Chess terminology is derived from concepts and judgements in their commonly accepted sense. Thus, a pawn is called "backward" when it has indeed stayed back, that is, when it is in the rear of the pawns of the same colour. It is called "passed" if it has proceeded past any opposing pawns on its own or the adjacent files. The terms "blockade", "attack", "centre", "flank", "thrust" and others are not essentially distinct from the concepts bestowed on them by life itself and the history of our language. The term "combination" can hardly be viewed as an exception to this natural, legitimate rule covering the derivation of chess vocabulary.

The word *combination* comes from the Latin *combinatio,* which denotes a certain association of phenomena and circumstances, enabling us to view the combined structure as a unified whole.

A combination of pieces and pawns is a particular arrangement of these units which presents one of the players with opportunities to utilize it for his own benefit, by force and in a relatively short time. In chess there exists the concept of a variation, which means a chain of moves logically connected to each other by a single design. A combinative arrangement of the chess forces on the board is a position in which it becomes possible to execute a forced variation leading to the achievement of an aim and thereby to an advantage.

As things turned out historically, however, the concept of a "combination" began to be applied not only (as originally) to a combinative arrangement of pieces, but to the process of the forced variation itself. Instead of *utilizing* a combination (of pieces and pawns), players started *implementing* a combination, that is, carrying out a forced variation stemming from the combinative qualities of a particular position. Combination was transformed from a static into a dynamic concept. Let us amalgamate these two concepts into one. This will enable us to investigate the statics and dynamics of combination on independent lines, as with any other chess process.

It is perfectly clear that any forced sequence in the chess struggle – any forced variation that is carried out – has an instigator, by which we mean the player who makes the first move of the combination in the expectation of reaching a goal that brings him benefit (improvement of his position; material gains; checkmate or sometimes perpetual check, stalemate etc.). The broad concept of combination, to which the classic figures of chess adhered, can be expressed by the following simple definition: a combination is a forced variation by means of which its instigator achieves the aim he has conceived. It might seem that this definition touches only the dynamics (or main part) of a combination. That is not however the case, for the very idea that a combination may be possible emerges from the static assessment of a position in front of us – a position containing attributes and peculiarities that give it a combinative character.

The practice of many centuries has enabled us to identify dozens – hundreds – of combinative traits that a position may contain. They open the way to a study of the procedures which characterize the combinative struggle, and to which the main chapters of this book are devoted.

Chapter 10

The Elements of Combination – Motif and Theme

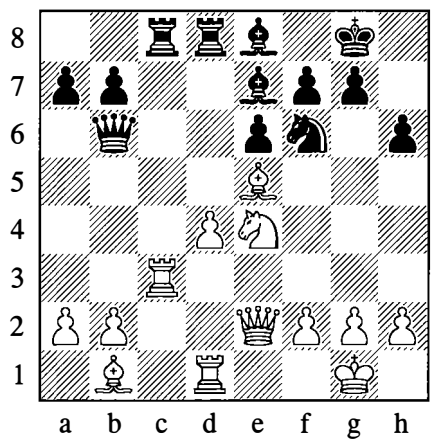
Combinations can present various degrees of difficulty in their execution. They can be short, simple and obvious, flowing logically from the systematic process of the struggle. They can also be highly complex, with continuations many moves deep, and sub-variations branching off; they can involve unexpected moves which are hard to calculate, and which even an inventive imagination may miss.

Not only during actual play but even afterwards in analysis, combinative solutions sometimes escape the attention of extremely eminent authorities.

We will give an example of such faulty analysis.

H. Pillsbury – S. Tarrasch

Nuremberg 1896



This position arose after 19.♖xc3 (the rook had recaptured a knight). Black should now continue 19...♘xe4 20.♕xe4 f5! and only afterwards exchange on c3; this would enable him to defend solidly. Instead Black played:

19...♖xc3

Tarrasch did not see any answer for White other than 20.bxc3. His opponent, however, unexpectedly played:

20.♘xf6†

In his commentary at this juncture, Tarrasch gave question marks to both Pillsbury's move and his own reply.

20...♗xf6

After this Black eventually lost in 60 moves.

...1–0

Tarrasch recommended taking the knight with the g-pawn, and maintained that in this way Black could have won the game. By way of proof, he gave the following variation among others in his analysis: 20...gxf6 21.♕g4† ♔f8 (not 21...♔h8, in view of 22.♕e4) 22.♕h5 ♗a4, with advantage to Black.

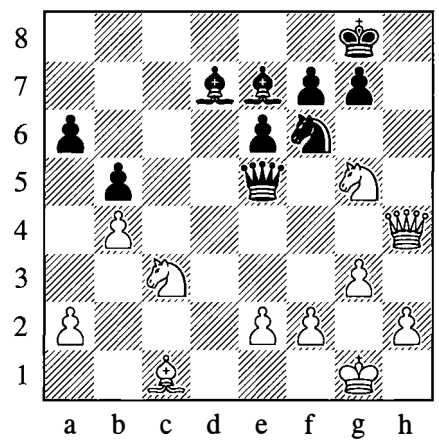
Yet Tarrasch overlooked that after 21...♔f8 22.♗h7 he would be mated (22...♗d6 23.♗xf6).

Thus, Pillsbury's 20.♘xf6†! amounted to the start of a fine combination which Tarrasch, however, failed to notice either during play or in analysis afterwards.

And here is another case where even World Champions missed a simple combination.

A. Alekhine – M. Euwe

World Championship (16), Netherlands 1937



26.♗b2?

With the simple combination 26.♕h8† ♔xh8 27.♘xf7† and 28.♘xe5, White could have reached an easily won ending. On the next move, the players *still* overlooked this combination.

26...♗c6? 27.a3?

It was only then that Euwe averted the threat by defending his queen.

27...♗d6

...½–½

We have given these examples (to which a good many more could be added) mainly to draw attention to the importance of combinative flair, that is, a keen attention to those features of a position which stimulate the mind and imagination to search for a combination.

The peculiarities of a position that express a certain potential for combination can most conveniently be called combinative *motifs*. In the combination that never occurred in the Alekhine – Euwe game, the principal motif (or *leitmotif*) was the undefended state of Black's queen on e5. Once Euwe had defended the queen with his bishop, this motif disappeared and the combination became impossible. Of course, by way of supplementary motifs, the position of White's knight on g5, and also of his queen, had a role to play. Both these pieces had taken up aggressive posts in the vicinity of Black's somewhat open king position.

As the study of numerous tactical processes has shown, the undefended state of a piece is one of the important motifs giving rise to a combination. The rationale of this motif is that it supplies the instigator of the combination with the prospect of a double attack, either on two undefended pieces or on one such piece with a simultaneous check to the king.

This is just what could have happened in the position we examined from the Alekhine – Euwe game, after 26.♕h8† ♔xh8 27.♘xf7†.

Chess history is familiar with many a combination on the double attack theme. This theme is also widely encountered today.

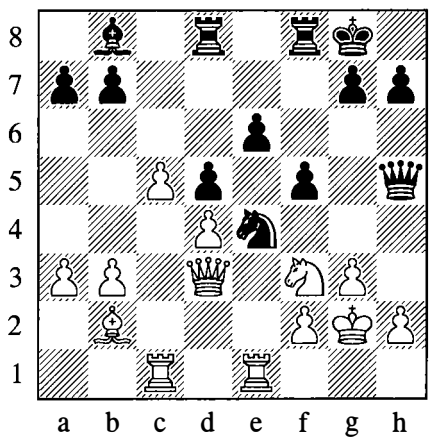
Here we come into contact with one other concept that is essential to our study of the combinative process. This concept is what we characterize as the *theme* of a combination.

If a motif can be called the stimulus to a combination, the "theme" is equated with its culmination, that is, the final situation in which the combinative project is realized.

The theme, so to speak, sums up the whole combination and draws the conclusion from it. Let us look at some more examples on the theme of a double attack, where the motif is supplied by the undefended state of pieces, in other words their location on unguarded squares.

D. Janowski – J. Mieses

Prague 1908



Black can maintain his initiative with 21...f4, but instead, utilizing the undefended state of White's queen on d3, he finds a way to increase his attack decisively by combinative means.

21...♕h3†!

A superb combination on the theme of a double attack. If White now falls in with this combinative theme – which in fact is probably the best thing to do – then after 22.♔xh3 ♘xf2† 23.♔g2 ♘xd3 24.♖xe6 ♘xc1 25.♗xc1 ♖de8 he is still unable to save the game in view of the material deficit. By avoiding this forced variation, Janowski loses even more quickly.

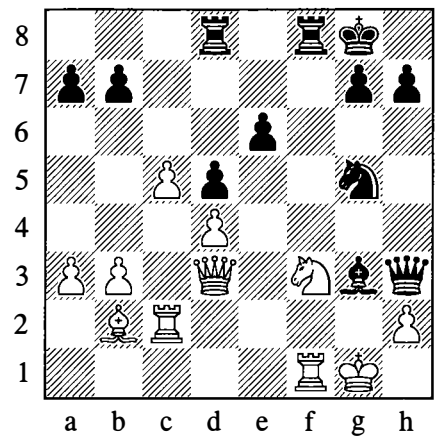
22.♔g1 f4

This attack is now deadly and leads to fresh combinations.

23.♖c2 fxg3 24.fxg3 ♗xg3

This combination too has the theme of a double attack after 25.hxg3 ♕xg3†, when in addition to giving check Black is hitting the knight on f3.

25.♖f1 ♘g5!



A fine concluding combination; once again, the theme is a form of double attack. The premise is the same – White's unguarded queen on d3. On 26.♘xg5 Black plays 26...♗xh2†, checking and attacking the queen at the same time.

26.hxg3 ♕xg3† 27.♖g2 ♘xf3† 28.♖xf3 ♕xf3 29.♕xf3 ♖xf3

White now continued the fight without any justification, and resigned on the 45th move.

...0–1

G. Fridstein – V. Smyslov

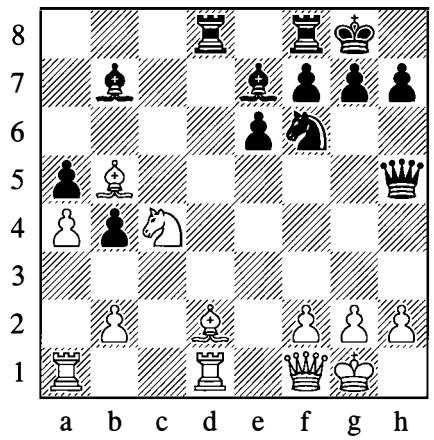
Queen's Gambit, Slav Defence
Moscow Championship 1944

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.c4 c6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.e3 b5 6.a4 b4 7.♘a2 e6 8.♗xc4 ♗e7 9.0–0

0–0 10.♕e2 ♗b7 11.♖d1 a5 12.♗d2 ♘bd7 13.♘c1 ♕b6 14.♘d3 c5 15.♘de5 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♖ad8 17.♗b5

White gives up the pawn on d4, aiming to gain the a5-pawn in return; however, this idea meets with a combinative refutation.

17...cxd4 18.exd4 ♕xd4 19.♘c4 ♕d5 20.♕f1 ♕h5



21.♘xa5

White naturally wants to make good what he has lost, before it is "too late". Black could answer 21.♗e3 with 21...♘g4, or 21.♗f4 with 21...♘d5. In general, White's king position has become shaky. Among other things, there is a threat of ...♖d4-h4 etc.

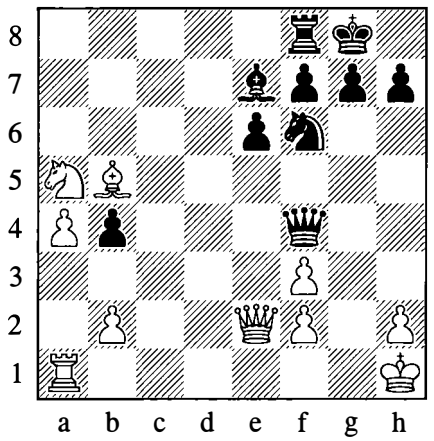
21...♗f3!

An "ungainly" move that initiates a combination on the double attack theme, which is already familiar to us.

22.gxf3 ♖xd2! 23.♖xd2 ♕g5†

In this case, in contrast to the previous examples, the motif of an undefended piece has arisen during the process of the combination itself. A player's field of vision needs to embrace not only the combinative factors currently available, but also the possibility of generating others in the course of the fight.

24.♔h1 ♕xd2 25.♕e2 ♕f4



Materially Black has gained nothing, but he has succeeded in wrecking the screen of pawns around the enemy king and creating a number of weak points in that area – such as the f3-pawn and especially the point h2, against which Black threatens to mount a dangerous attack with ...♗d6.

26.♘c4 ♖c8 27.♖d1 ♖c5 28.♘e3 b3 29.♘g2 ♕c7 30.♘e3 g6 31.♕d3 ♕f4 32.♘g2 ♕b4 33.♘e3 ♕h4 34.a5 ♖h5 35.♘f1 ♕xf2

And White soon resigned.

0–1

So the result of a combination can be, and often is, simply the improvement of your position, the creation of weaknesses in your opponent's camp, the attainment of an aggressive formation for your pieces, or other positional assets – rather than a material plus.

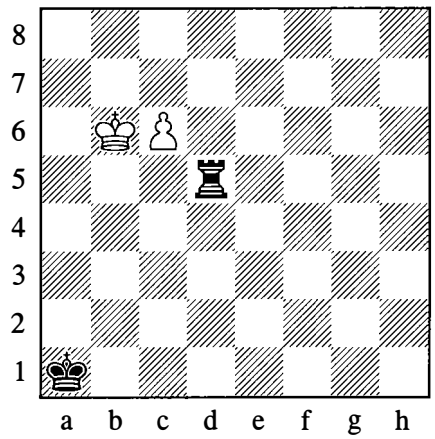
The theme of a double attack is also characteristic of many endgame combinations. We find it in a most elegant setting in the following well-known study.

The prerequisites of the combination are supplied by White's far advanced passed pawn and also, however strange it may seem at first sight, by the position of Black's king in the corner of the board. It is perfectly clear that

Black must try to give up his rook for the pawn. The first move of the combination, and also Black's subsequent replies, are obvious.

F. Saavedra & G. Barbier

1895



1.c7

It is interesting to note that if Black's king were on b1 he could draw without trouble, either by means of the rook checks 1...♖d6† 2.♔b5 ♖d5† etc., or else by simply playing 1...♖d2 and then checking on the b2- and a2-squares.

1...♖d6† 2.♔b5 ♖d5† 3.♔b4 ♖d4† 4.♔c3 ♖d1 5.♔c2 ♖d4!

To meet 6.c8=♕ with the drawing resource 6...♖c4† 7.♕xc4 stalemate.

6.c8=♖! ♖a4 7.♔b3!

The point of the combination is the double attack against a4 and c1. Black will be mated in a few moves.

1–0

In the following chapters we shall acquaint ourselves with a variety of other combinative motifs and plans. We shall encounter these elements of combination throughout the whole book.

First of all, however, we must undertake a major excursus into the realm of the inner content of combination. This will introduce us to wellsprings of combinative activity that are far more vital than the purely theoretical prerequisites in the form of combinative "motifs".

Chapter 11

The Aesthetics of Combination: General Concepts

Every higher expression of harmony produces a profound aesthetic impression. It arouses enthusiasm and generates ideas of the beautiful.

In the art of chess, a combination is the highest expression of the harmony of the forces. Even a combination simple in structure is aesthetic in itself, by the mere fact that all the pieces participating in it on the side of the instigator are merging their powers into one, harmoniously implementing the combinative theme.

The aesthetics of combination also finds expression in the methods of action. Here the concept of sacrifice comes right to the fore. In what does the aesthetics of sacrifice lie? From their very first steps, as we know, beginners are taught to take care of material. We show them instructive examples in which a master resigns the game after losing a minor piece, since he considers further resistance useless. Even an extra pawn, just one pawn and no more, often brings its owner an easy win. For that reason, the voluntary surrender of a pawn or piece, or the exchange of a stronger piece for a weaker one – queen for rook, or rook for knight, and so forth – is an event that stands out contrastingly against the austere background in which even the weakest chess unit is cautiously husbanded. If the sacrifice involves a number of pieces, or a strong piece such as the queen or rook, the contrast is all the greater.

The seeming absurdity and recklessness of a move is suddenly transformed, by the power of its idea, into an instrument of triumph and victory. Thanks to its covert meaning, what is outwardly weak triumphs over strength.

Skill, intellect and imagination emerge as victors in the fight with the more mightily armed opponent. This constitutes the distinctive beauty of the sacrifice. The sacrifice is often unexpected, and this suddenness disrupts the usual everyday notions about the course of the struggle; it also transports the spectator into a realm of magic adventures. There is even an extensive special terminology by which the aesthetics of chess combinations is articulated; it has introduced the concepts of stylish and even graceful combinations, achievements of rare beauty, immortal ideas, polished mating procedures, elegant solutions and so on. In tournaments back in the nineteenth century, special prizes for the beauty of the play already began to be awarded.

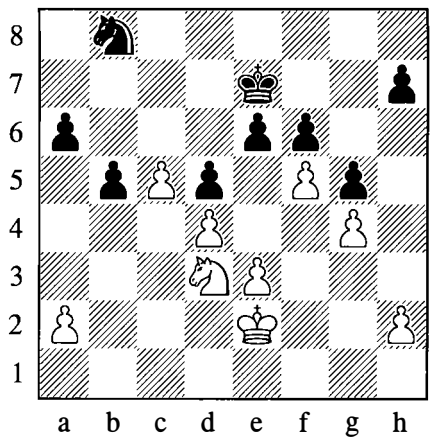
Chess literature contains a number of articles and special works devoted to the aesthetics of combination. We would point to the work entitled "Beauty in a Game of Chess" by Professor A.A. Smirnov, a literary specialist; and the book by the drama theorist V.I. Volkenshtein, *The Experience of Modern Aesthetics*, in which we find a special chapter devoted to chess. There is also a special chapter (the fifth) entitled "The Aesthetics of Chess" in *Lasker's Manual of Chess* by the World Champion of long years.

We will now give some examples of beauty in chess combinations. We begin our illustration with an endgame in which the simplicity and ordinariness of the situation will contrast especially

sharply with the unexpected intrusion of the combination. This circumstance is sure to make a strong aesthetic impression on us. It would seem that in the simple position, a lofty artistic idea makes its appearance.

H. Pillsbury – I. Gunsberg

Hastings 1895



Let us see what an original and interesting combination developed from here.

28.♘b4

This move should already put Black on the alert. Can he not answer it with 28...a5, and will not the white knight have to retreat?

28...a5

Black has nothing better at his disposal. After 28...exf5 29.gxf5, White can follow with 30.♘xd5†.

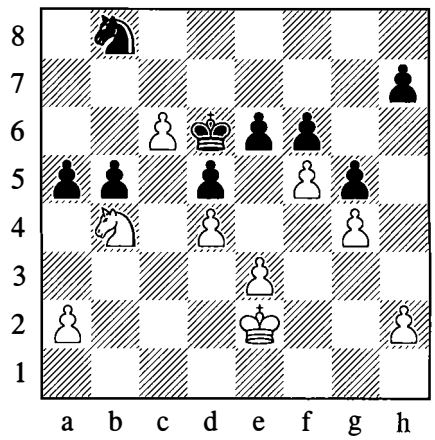
On 28...♔d7, White's simplest course is 29.fxe6† ♔xe6 30.c6 ♔d6 31.c7 ♔xc7 32.♘xd5† and 33.♘xf6.

29.c6!!

The start of a long combination, the main theme of which is a dual threat from a pawn – a distinctive type of double attack.

29...♔d6

But now it seems that the knight *must* retreat.



30.fxe6!!

The key to White's combinative idea.

30...♘xc6

Black has nothing else. As is often the case during the course of a combination, the position is striking and unconventional. A mere two moves ago, it looked like a quiet knight endgame with some positional advantage to White. Now two white pawns have penetrated to the sixth rank, and White's knight – his last remaining piece – is being offered as a sacrifice. What for? Why is it that Black now *declines* the sacrifice? The answer lies in the following possible continuation: 30...axb4 31.e7 ♔xe7 32.c7, and the white pawn queens, as Black has no defence against the twin threats of cxb8=♕ and c8=♕. A distinctive form of double attack by a pawn!

31.♘xc6 ♔xc6 32.e4! dxe4 33.d5†

If the first theme of the combination was the pawn's "double attack", the second is the creation of two connected passed pawns that have crossed the boundary between the two camps.

33...♔d6 34.♔e3 b4 35.♔xe4 a4 36.♔d4

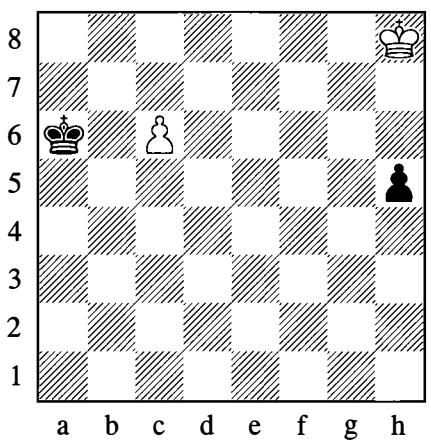
White succeeds in stopping the black pawns. This duly decided the outcome of the fight.

...1–0

Pillsbury's combination with scant material was rated by his contemporaries as one of the most elegant achievements in the Hastings tournament. And elegant it is indeed. The elegance of the combination derives from its suddenness, and from the originality of its theme which is rarely encountered in practice; from the simplicity of the material taking part in it; from the fine sacrifice of the sole remaining piece; and, in general terms, from the beauty of the entire conception. Two pawns on nearly adjacent squares, without any piece support, overcome the resistance of the king and knight, that is, considerably stronger units.

R. Reti

1921



It is White to play and draw. At first sight, the task seems patently absurd. The white pawn on c6 can be dealt with, while the black one cannot possibly be caught by the white king. Such is the obvious state of affairs. But in this case the obvious is not the truth. In actual fact White executes a combination with two themes. One of them involves the white king successfully chasing the black pawn, the other involves White's own pawn queening in spite of the black king firmly standing guard. The combination goes like this:

1.♔g7! h4 2.♔f6! ♔b6

Now if 2...h3 3.♔e6 h2 4.c7 ♔b7 5.♔d7, and White too queens.

3.♔e5!!

A move with two threats! One is to enter the square of the h-pawn, the other is to defend White's own passed pawn.

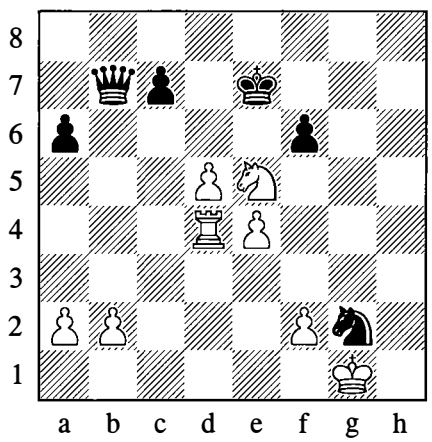
3...h3 4.♔d6 h2 5.c7

½–½

Our excitement is aroused by many combinative studies by that classic endgame composer, the unforgettable A. Troitsky. As an illustration we will give one of them which to us seems aesthetically the most impressive.

A. Troitsky

1910

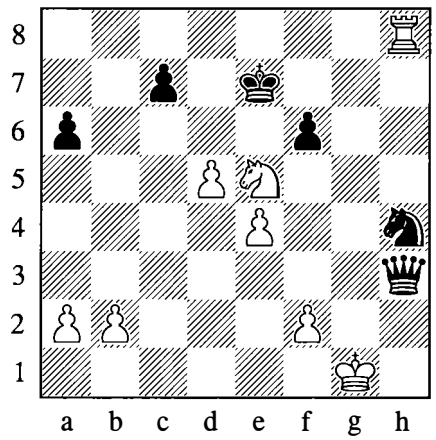


The combination that leads to victory is based on a sixfold repetition of the theme of a double attack – but that is not all. The beauty of the study additionally resides in

the extremely economical movement of the white rook, which travels the same route (incorporating 4 squares), first forwards and then backwards – and produces a devastating effect with this "lazy" economy:

1.♖b4! ♕c8 2.♖b8 ♕h3 3.♖h8 ♘h4

The best defence is 3...♕xh8 4.♘g6† ♔e8 5.♘xh8 ♘f4 6.♔h2 (otherwise the white knight will be trapped by ...♔f8-g7) 6...♘d3, leaving White with an extra pawn in the knight endgame.



4.♖xh4 ♕c8 5.♖h8 ♕b7 6.♖b8

Black finally loses his obstinately fleeing queen. The shape of the rook's manoeuvre ♖b8-h8xh4-h8-b8 is also an artistic feature.

1–0

In considering how an imaginative move in a game of chess makes its effect on the spectator, Emanuel Lasker writes: "The spectator enjoys not a game of Chess, but history, drama; that a Chessboard is its stage, and Chess pieces its actors, matters not. If the drama of a Chess game be presented by human actors on the stage of a theatre, its aesthetic effect would not be a particle different – provided only, as stated above as a condition, the spectator has interest and comprehension."

Not all combinations produce an equal aesthetic effect. A coarse exterior (the form) may not correspond to a subtle conception (the content). At the basis of a combination, two important creative principles – dynamics and harmony – are always united. It is this union that produces the images whose artistic content largely forms the aesthetics of combination.

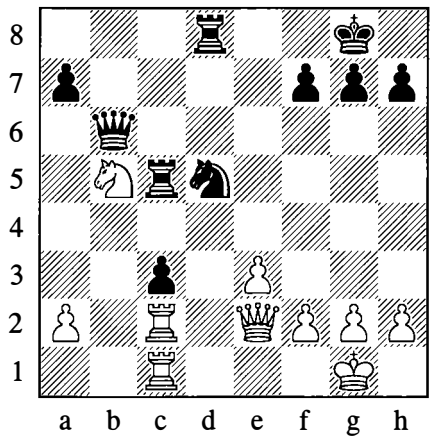
Chapter 12

Idea and Technique of an "Incarcerated King" Combination

The notions of "motif" and "theme" can best be classed as theoretical concepts. A definite hint of creativity is attached to them, but it is no more than a hint. And yet a combination, which is one of the basic sources of artistic creativity in chess, clearly contains some other element which leads the player's mind from the approximate signposts – the "motifs" – to the precisely defined goal: the "theme". The means to this end is supplied by a concrete scheme, in other words an idea. An idea! Here is the chief product of a human being's creative fantasy and thought, by which a prosaic accumulation of small advantages is transformed into an exuberant combinative process.

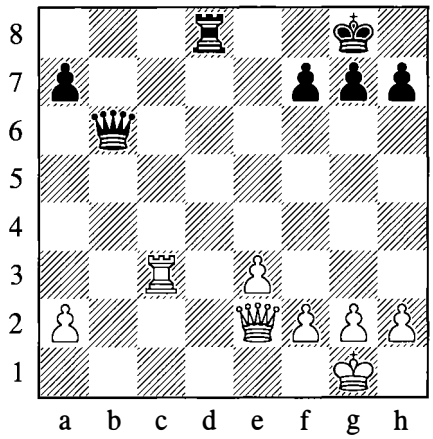
O. Bernstein – J.R. Capablanca

Moscow 1914



White's position is unsatisfactory. His knight is attacked, and if it retreats to a3 or d4, Black will reinforce his far-advanced passed pawn by playing ...♖dc8 (with a threat of ...♘b4) – and White will be unable to hold out for long against the very powerful pressure. It is only natural that White can see no other way out than capturing the dangerous pawn, especially since it is attacked three times and only defended by two black pieces. Specifically, the following variation takes shape in his mind: 27.♘xc3 ♘xc3 28.♖xc3 ♖xc3 29.♖xc3 ♕b1† 30.♕f1 ♕xa2, and considering the equality of material, White has good drawing chances. Up to a certain moment, the game did indeed follow that variation.

27.♘xc3 ♘xc3 28.♖xc3 ♖xc3 29.♖xc3



But now Black did not play the anticipated 29...♕b1†.

29...♕b2!!

This double attack on the white rook and queen leads to an immediate win, as the rook is now lost. Black answers 30.♕e1 with 30...♕xc3, and 30.♖c2 with 30...♕b1†.

0–1

We can easily see that the possibility of implementing this double attack theme rests on the unfortunate position of the white king, which has no escape routes from Black's terrible invasion. If White had earlier played h2-h3 or g2-g3, Black's combination would have been impossible. Thus the king's restricted position, hampered in its movements by White's own pawns, was the chief prerequisite for the combination.

It must not however be supposed that the "motif" of the constricted king is in itself evidence that the position is ripe for combination. The outward structure of pieces and pawns is nowhere near enough to yield that conclusion. To a certain extent, of course, a player's thinking does start out from the structural peculiarities in its search for combinative solutions, but that is merely the start. One and the same situation of the king (for instance a boxed-in position, as in the example we have been examining) may be, or again may not be, the prerequisite for a combination. It depends on the tactical tension in the position and a range of details that characterize that tension.

An *open* king position may also figure as a "combinative motif", but only on condition that the king can become, even if only potentially, an object of attack. In most types of endgame, the exposed situation of the king can be viewed as a combinative motif only in rare instances.

Generalizing, we may say that the characteristic features of a position can assume the significance of combinative motifs only when accompanied by other circumstances which, in their totality, offer serious creative potential. Returning to the combination in the Bernstein – Capablanca game, let us point to the additional features which allowed the boxed-in position of the white king (the black one, by the way, was similarly constricted!) to be viewed as a combinative motif. Those features were the presence of major pieces on the board, and the open files which could clearly serve as paths for the black queen and rook to reach the first rank.

What was the idea of Capablanca's combination, in other words what task was he setting himself when he sacrificed the pawn on c3, the chief trump that sustained his positional pressure? Of course, Black's idea was to penetrate to the first rank with his queen or rook. To make that penetration possible, he had to divert the white rook and queen from the defence of the points d1 and b1. By sacrificing his c3-pawn he succeeded in diverting the rook, while the diversion of the queen was accomplished by the powerful theme move, ...♕b2.

It must be stated here that the "theme" or culmination of the combination was unusual and beautiful in its form, and that it blended organically (so to speak) into the basic creative scheme – the idea.

The execution of an idea often requires a powerful imagination and the employment of numerous devices which together make up the technical side of the procedure. Let us list some technical devices that contribute to executing a combinative idea: removal of a barrier (obstacle); blocking; pinning (of a piece); interference (with the line of action of a piece); diversion of a piece from its defensive functions; drawing a piece onto the square where the attacker wants it; and so forth. In chess as in any other affair, technique is of paramount importance; only a correct and opportune use of its devices (which are sometimes highly complex) can enable the creative thought in a combination to find its full expression. A correctly conceived idea can be made impossible of execution by a single slipshod device.

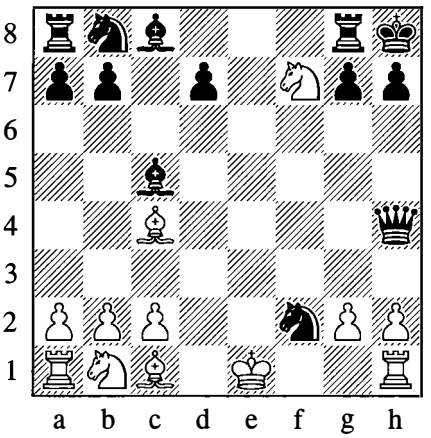
To conclude the present chapter, we will consider another specific combinative idea of a striking character. In this case, the theme of the combination is nothing more or less than the demise of a monarch "smothered" by his own comrades-in-arms. In essence, this idea is closely related to the type of mate we have just been examining, where a player's king is boxed in by his own pawns. The idea in question has travelled a long historical journey and appears to have entered the history of combination as far back as the time of Greco (1600-34). We are speaking of a king that succumbs to mate because the pieces and pawns (of the same colour) surrounding it are totally depriving it of the possibility of moving.

In a beginners' game which Schiffers quotes in his "Self-Tutor" without naming the contestants, this mate is demonstrated as follows.

1.e4 e5 2.d4 c5 3.dxc5

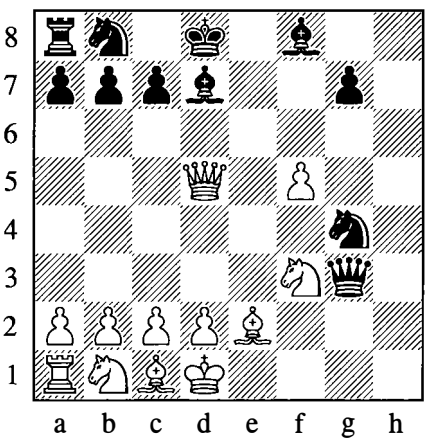
Black's pawn sacrifice was unjustified – White could calmly have taken the pawn on e5

3...♗xc5 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♗c4 0–0 6.♘xe5 ♘xe4 7.♕d5 ♘xf2 8.♘xf7 ♕h4 9.♘h6† ♔h8 10.♕g8†! ♖xg8 11.♘f7#



This type of mate inflicted on a king that is shut in by a rook (or knight) and pawns has acquired the name of a smothered mate.

With Greco, we find the following example of a smothered mate at the end of one of the games or variations recorded in his manuscripts.



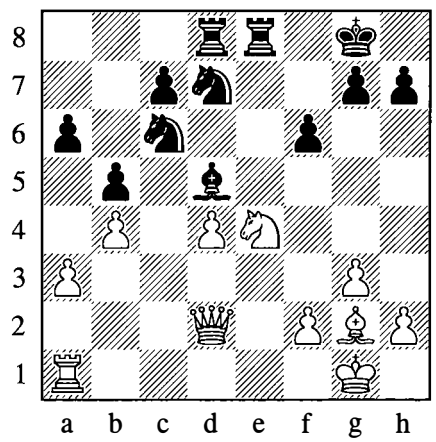
15...♘f2† 16.♔e1 ♘d3† 17.♔d1 ♕e1†! 18.♘xe1 ♘f2#

Here the white king is walled in by two pawns and three minor pieces.

We can easily see much in common between the ideas of the two combinations, and

the technique of their execution. Both combinations are based on a double check from the queen and knight, in the first case by ♘h6† and in the second by ...♘d3†. The idea of the combination finds expression in a queen sacrifice that has the purpose of blocking – making inaccessible – the last square to which the king could still have moved. (In compositions this idea is called incarcerating the king.)

The smothered mate also crops up in games, as a threat which may bring decisive gains to the active side. From a few offhand games in our possession that contain such a mating idea, we will give the following example.



In this position, where White has a small material advantage, the struggle could still last a long time if a combinative possibility involving the idea of a smothered mate were not at White's disposal.

There followed:

24.♘d6!
1–0

Black resigned, as he suffers fresh material losses after 24...cxd6 25.♗xd5† etc.

In the event of 24...♗xg2 (the only way the serious loss of material can be averted), the main line of the combination follows: 25.♕a2† ♔h8 26.♘f7† ♔g8 27.♘h6† ♔h8 28.♕g8† ♖xg8 29.♘f7#

It only remains for us to say a few words about the idea of the combination to which the smothered mate forms the conclusion. The idea is to reduce the enemy king to a state where it is totally immobile owing to being solidly surrounded by its own pieces and pawns.

To carry out this idea, which results from the concerted (harmonious) attack with the queen and knight, the following actions are required: the diagonal check with the queen; the double check with the queen and knight; and, finally, the queen sacrifice leading to the total confinement of the king by pieces of its own colour. After that, the knight delivers mate from the critical square which it occupies for the second time. Today this combination is of historical significance more than anything else; but irrespective of that, even in our own time, its artistic qualities – the queen sacrifice and the outward structure of the mate – make a strong aesthetic impact on lovers of chess.

Chapter 13

More about Aesthetics – Pseudo-Sacrifice – Queen Sacrifice

In the foregoing chapters we already touched on the question of sacrifice as an element in the aesthetics of the art of chess. As already explained, a sacrifice is what we call the voluntary surrender of material of any kind – pawn, minor piece or whatever – in order to execute a combinative idea.

Some sacrifices can be called pseudo-sacrifices. This applies when the material surrendered is recovered with interest in the space of one, two or three moves, and the sacrificer himself acquires a material advantage. The same also perhaps applies to a sacrifice like the one in the Bernstein – Capablanca game that we saw earlier: the queen places itself under attack but cannot be captured because of checkmate, which in this case would be immediate. In fact a sacrifice of this type can be called a pseudo-sacrifice with still more justification – but even a pseudo-sacrifice is by no means devoid of beauty. It too constitutes a sharp and sudden affront to habitual notions about the possibility and legitimacy of this or that move. The first impression made by a pseudo-sacrifice is the same as that made by a blunder (the overlooking of a threat). When it "emerges" that the piece placed under attack on an undefended square cannot be captured, the entire imaginative design arouses interest. The point is that a pseudo-sacrifice, which like a true sacrifice is an active and aggressive deed, requires an appropriate combinative setting.

Thus, a great difference in essence between a sacrifice and a pseudo-sacrifice is difficult to detect. Strictly speaking, the prefix "pseudo" can be attached to almost any sacrifice, seeing that the final result of a combination is that its instigator derives benefit from it (or should do, according to the very definition of a combination). Disputes about whether an offer of material has the right to be called a "sacrifice" have little bearing on the strength of its aesthetic effect. Both a sacrifice and a pseudo-sacrifice constitute a sudden violation of accepted customary notions, and this alone is enough to give the events an aesthetic appeal.

The different degrees of aesthetic impact depend on a number of circumstances that concern the relation between the sacrificial idea and the process of the combination as a whole. A significant point, for instance, is the moment at which the sacrifice is offered; it may occur at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the combination. In the Bernstein – Capablanca game the final pseudo-sacrifice, represented by the move 29...♕b2!, produced an almost unanimous response from commentators: "A spectacular concluding blow!" is the sort of thing they wrote in their annotations to the game. The aesthetics of this pseudo-sacrifice were made up of four factors: its geometric beauty; its non-obvious nature and hence its unexpectedness; the fact that it had been seen "in the distance"; and finally its power and irresistibility, which brought about the opponent's immediate surrender.

A not lesser effect, and even a greater one, may be produced by a sacrifice at the *beginning* of a combination many moves deep, when the correctness of the sacrifice cannot be quickly

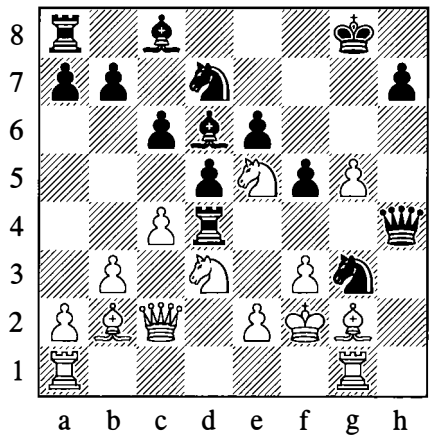
determined and the struggle may continue for quite a long time in a state of material inequality, with victory nonetheless going to the side with the smaller force.

One other matter that we should like to mention here is the scale of the sacrifice. You can sacrifice a pawn, a minor piece, a rook, or a number of pieces (see for instance the Anderssen – Kieseritzky game which we shall examine in Chapter 15) – but it is also possible to sacrifice the queen, that is, the most powerful piece among all the forces active on the chessboard. Because of the queen's very power, the sacrifice or pseudo-sacrifice of this piece often makes a particularly powerful impact.

Let us look at some combinations featuring such a sacrifice.

A. Kotov – I. Bondarevsky

Savitsky Memorial, Leningrad 1936



This is no ordinary position. The 21st move has already been made, but not a single piece has been exchanged. Black's queenside is "frozen", and two of his pieces – a rook and a bishop – are standing idle. The other black rook, on d4, has become entangled with the pieces of the other side, and it must obviously perish in the narrow cage where it has landed. Black's situation might seem unenviable, and yet White's king is extremely insecure – which creates the premises for all manner of combinations. Black threatens not only to give discovered or double check (...♘e4†) but also simply to capture the knight on e5. White therefore has no choice – he is forced to take the rook.

22.♗xd4 ♘e4†!? 23.♔e3

This allows mate, as Black has at his disposal a pretty combination with a queen sacrifice.

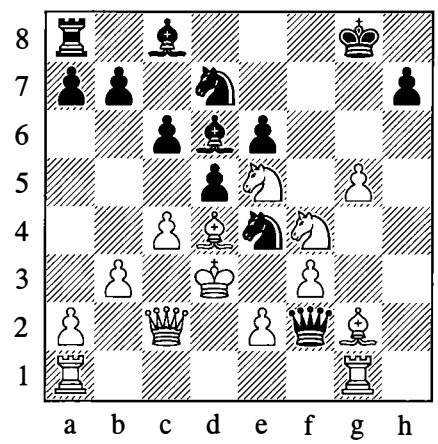
Retreating with 23.♔f1 was necessary. Then continuing 23...♗xe5 24.♘xe5 ♘g3† 25.♔f2 ♕xd4† 26.♔xg3 ♘xe5 results in an unclear position.

Black would do better to go back with 23...♘g3† 24.♔f2 and now: 24...♕xd4† 25.e3 (after 25.♔xg3 ♘xe5 26.♘xe5 ♗xe5† 27.♔h3 ♕f4 White is quickly mated) 25...♕h4 Black's attack remains very dangerous.

23...f4†!

This check serves two purposes: it causes the f4-square to be blocked, and diverts the white knight from the defence of the f2-square.

24.♘xf4 ♕f2† 25.♔d3



25...♕xd4†!!

The white king will be mated in the middle of the board by three minor pieces; at the moment of the mate, White retains a large material plus.

26.♔xd4 ♗c5† 27.♔d3 ♘xe5#

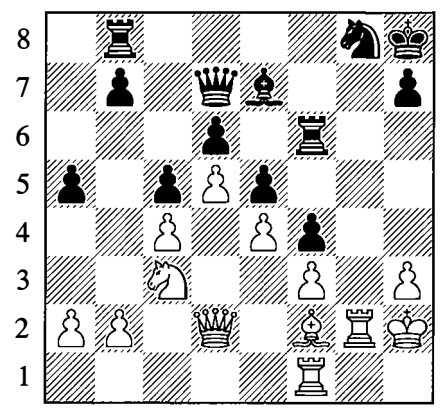
The idea of the combination consisted of drawing the white king into a mating net. In this operation the queen sacrifice played the decisive part.

In the Bernstein – Capablanca game, the queen sacrifice was the final climax of the combination. In Kotov – Bondarevsky, the queen sacrifice forced the culminating mate in three moves.

In the following example, the sacrifice is undertaken at the very beginning. The combination opens with it; this makes the most striking impression, as there is a long way to go from the sacrifice itself to the moment when the point of it – the "theme" – is demonstrated. Just as in the Kotov – Bondarevsky game, however, the idea of the combination is to draw the king out into the open and into a mating net.

Y. Averbakh – A. Kotov

Candidates Tournament, Zurich 1953



The black pawn chain d6-e5-f4 has an extremely cramping effect on the actions of White's pieces. The white king is insecure; the point h3, against which Black threatens to direct his attack with ...♖h6, is very weak.

30.♘e2?

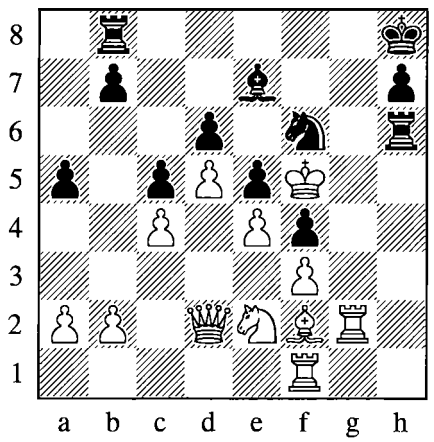
White intends to defend the h3-point with his knight from g1, but a combinative storm now breaks.

Black's scheme could have been prevented by 30.h4 ♖h6 31.♖g4.

30...♕xh3†!!

A beautiful sacrifice which demonstrates that the strength of a piece depends on its position and the dynamic role it is destined to play in the coming events. White's quantitative advantage of a whole queen is more than nullified by the active placing of the black pieces. The white ones, furthermore, are now left in the rear of the king and are unable to come to its aid within the very short time available.

31.♔xh3 ♖h6† 32.♔g4 ♘f6† 33.♔f5



33...♘d7!

Black now threatens mate in three moves with 34...♖f8† etc.

34.♖g5 ♖f8† 35.♔g4 ♘f6† 36.♔f5 ♘g8†!

37.♔g4 ♘f6†

Black was in time trouble, giving rise to some unnecessary moves.

The most direct route to victory was 37...♗xg5! 38.♔xg5 ♖f7 39.♗h4 ♖g7† 40.♔f5 ♖hg6, and mate in two more moves.

38.♔f5 ♘xd5†?! 39.♔g4 ♘f6† 40.♔f5 ♘g8† 41.♔g4 ♘f6† 42.♔f5 ♘g8† 43.♔g4 ♗xg5 44.♔xg5 ♖f7

Again threatening to give mate, after 45...♖g7†.

45.♗h4 ♖g6† 46.♔h5 ♖fg7 47.♗g5 ♖xg5† 48.♔h4 ♘f6

48...♖5g6 would also win.

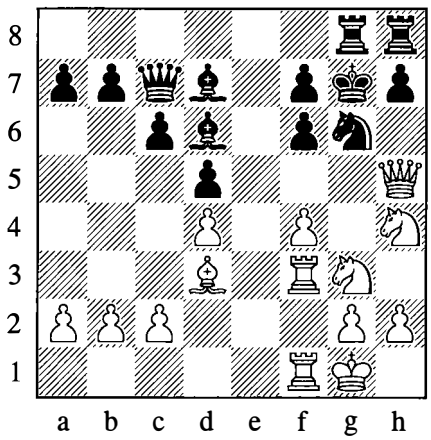
49.♘g3 ♖xg3 50.♕xd6 ♖3g6 51.♕b8† ♖g8 0–1

Black did not choose the most effective way to exploit his sacrifice. This didn't alter the result of the game, but the artistic side of the combination was impaired. We can see, then, that technical perfection is also a vital factor in chess aesthetics. If we are looking for an analogy, then a technical error in the process of a combination can perhaps be compared to a smear on a painting which as a whole is executed with artistry. In the case of the painting, however, the smear can be corrected, wiped off, and in this way the full artistic value of the work can be restored. In chess this is not possible. The inaccuracy committed while implementing the idea is attached to the game in perpetuity, as a sign of its artistic incompleteness.

Let us turn to some further illustrations of interest to us. As is well known, combinative romanticism occupied a cherished place in the thoughts of many chess players of the 19th century and earlier. Such outstanding representatives of western romanticism as Anderssen, Zukertort, Mackenzie, Blackburne, Bird and others were ardent exponents of sacrificial tactics. Among other things, they played a fair number of queen sacrifices. We will start by giving some examples from these players' games.

G. Mackenzie – J. Mason

Paris 1878



17.♕h6†!

Black was just on the point of slipping away with his king to f8. His previous move was 16...♖ag8. By sacrificing his queen, White compels Black's king to journey into the enemy camp, where of course he can expect no mercy. We shall later see that this kind of ploy – drawing the king by force into the zone of the hostile army – has almost acquired the status of a typical device. The combination in the present game, however, was one of the first to be based on this idea.

17...♔xh6 18.♘hf5† ♗xf5 19.♘xf5† ♔h5 20.g4†

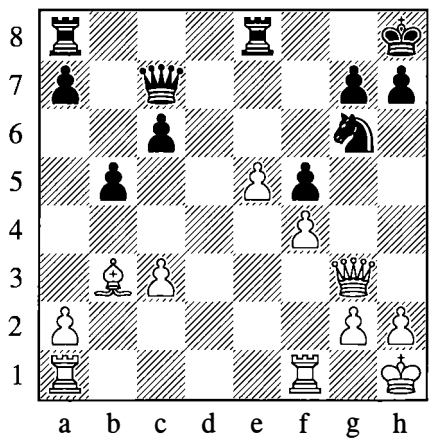
This pawn sacrifice is not obligatory. White could also have mated in at most 3 moves with 20.♖h3†, and now 20...♔g4 21.♘h6# or 20...♘h4 21.♖xh4† ♔g6 22.♖h6#.

20...♔xg4 21.♖g3† ♔h5 22.♗e2#

Thus, checkmate was the theme of the combination. From now on we shall refer to such mates as thematic. In this combination, three thematic mates were involved: mate on e2 with the bishop, on h6 with the knight and on h6 with the rook.

I. Kolisch – S. Loyd

Paris 1867



The situation might seem perfectly quiet, and yet White had been aiming for this very position, spurred on by a powerful combinative "motif" in the shape of his very actively placed bishop. The a2-g8 diagonal on which this bishop is stationed is positively crying out for a combination.

The famous problemist Loyd was probably thunderstruck when White played:

26.♕xg6!!

In view of 26...hxg6 27.♖f3!, Black can now resign. The six further moves that he played were basically a redundant expenditure.

26...♕d7 27.♖f3 ♖ad8 28.♖h3 h6 29. e6 ♕c7 30. ♕xf5 ♖f8 31.♕e5 ♕xe5 32.fxe5 1–0

We will now show a couple of queen sacrifices carried out by the leader of German romanticism, Adolf Anderssen.

A. Anderssen – E. Schallopp

Falkbeer Counter Gambit
Berlin 1864

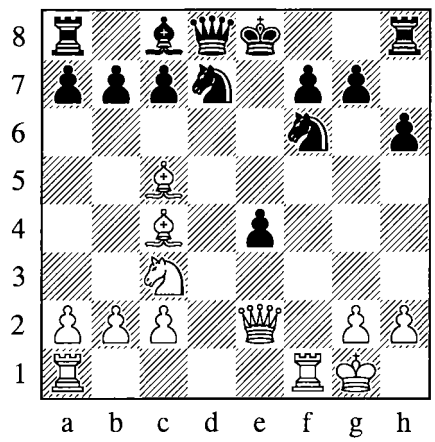
1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.♘f3 dxe4 4.♘xe5 ♗d6 5.♗c4 ♗xe5 6.fxe5 ♕d4 7.♕e2 ♕xe5 8.d4! ♕xd4 9.♘c3 ♘f6 10.♗e3 ♕d8 11.0–0 h6?

White would answer 11...0–0 with 12.♖ad1 ♕e7 13.♗d4 ♘bd7 14.♖f4, obtaining a powerful initiative.

12.♗c5

Now the threat is 13.♖ad1 ♗d7 (or 13...♘bd7) 14.♕xe4†!. Black overlooks this queen sacrifice, but in any case he cannot defend against White's combinative attack.

12...♘bd7



13.♕xe4†!

The sacrifice is obvious, which considerably lowers its aesthetic value; the queen is nevertheless giving itself up for negligible material. Anderssen's contemporaries rated this combination as a "highly instructive finish". The concluding mate is original and "pure":

13...♘xe4 14.♗xf7#
1–0

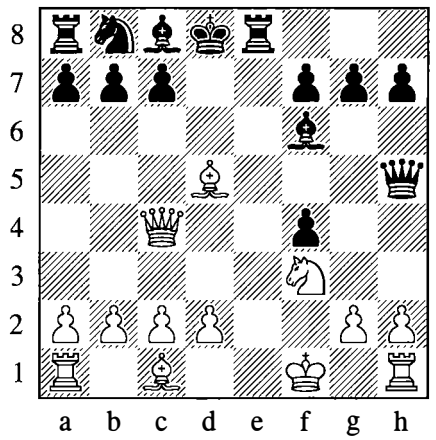
There is nothing to be said about the factors giving rise to the combination. The course of the game from the very start was full of combinative motifs, among which the weakness of f7 stood out as a "beacon". The attack against this point formed the idea of the combination, to which the diverting of Black's knight from f6 contributed.

This thematic mate is a "pure" mate with two bishops against Black's king that is half enclosed by its own pieces. Schallopp conducted the game weakly, and it probably cost Anderssen no great effort to display the aesthetic lustre of his ideas.

F. Riemann – A. Anderssen

King's Gambit
Breslau 1876

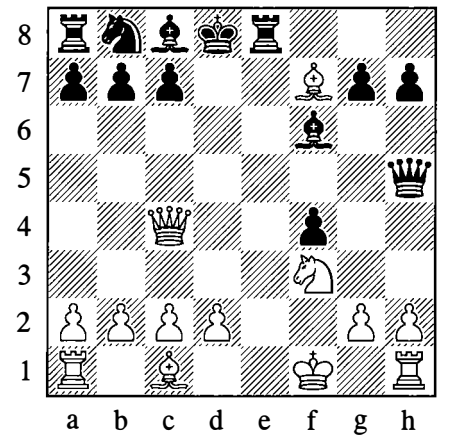
1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♗c4 ♕h4† 4.♔f1 d5 5.♗xd5 ♘f6 6.♘c3 ♗b4 7.e5 ♗xc3 8.exf6 ♗xf6 9.♘f3 ♕h5 10.♕e2† ♔d8 11.♕c4 ♖e8



A transparent combinative "trap"; you don't need to be particularly astute to notice it, and yet queen sacrifices are the ones most often overlooked.

12.♗xf7?

White should have played 12.d3, though after 12...c6 13.♗e4 g5, he doesn't have sufficient compensation for the pawn minus.



12...♕xf3†! 13.gxf3 ♗h3† 14.♔f2
Or 14.♔g1 ♖e1† 15.♔f2 ♗h4#.

14...♗h4† 15.♔g1 ♖e1† 16.♕f1 ♖xf1#

White "fell" for the combination! This example again illustrates a type of case that is far from rare. Very often a combination will go unnoticed not only by the player who is threatened by it. Sometimes even "obvious" combinations will fall outside a player's field of vision, as we have seen already and will discover again more than once. What does this tell us? It tells us that combinations constitute the element of the chess struggle which is least amenable to theoretical generalizations and investigations. It is not for nothing that the concept of combinative vision has entered the canon of chess terminology. Combinative vision arises somewhere in the hidden recesses of our thoughts, and, aiding our imagination in its work, enables us to discover interesting, beautiful, and outwardly well camouflaged combinations.

It is well known that there are some chess players who possess particularly good, keen

combinative vision. Among contemporary Soviet players, it is above all Tal, Spassky and Korchnoi who can be placed in that category. Giants of combination from past times were Anderssen, Zukertort, Pillsbury, Lasker, Chigorin and, of course, Alekhine.

At the same time, there are strong chess players whose combinative vision is merely average. In the main, it is by these very players that combinations are overlooked.

That is why the failure to spot a combination should not be compared to a simple "blunder" that loses a piece or pawn or allows mate.

Admittedly it has proved possible to place certain combinative patterns – of which more will be said later – on a theoretical footing, but as yet such patterns are relatively few in number.

In taking this opportunity for a short lyrical digression, we had no intention of abandoning the topic of queen sacrifices. In this area we still have abundant material which we feel strictly obliged to bring to our readers' attention. Here are a few more illustrations from the old days.

Hampe – P. Meitner

Vienna Game
Vienna 1870

1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗c5 3.♘a4 ♗xf2†

White wanted to refute Black's second move, Black wants to refute White's third. Some sharp play is set in train, in which White tries to maintain his extra piece.

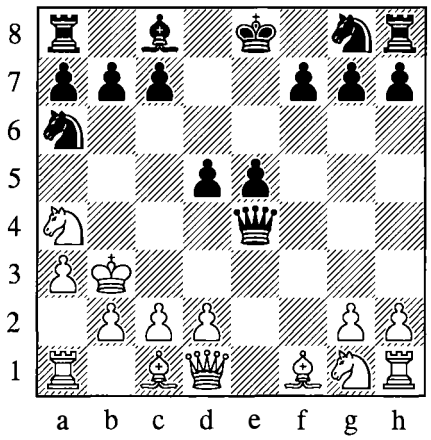
4.♔xf2 ♕h4† 5.♔e3

After 5.g3 ♕xe4 6.♘f3 ♕xa4, White doesn't have enough compensation for the two pawns.

5...♕f4† 6.♔d3 d5 7.♔c3 ♕xe4 8.♔b3

Here and on the next move, 8.d4 is stronger.

8...♘a6 9.a3



9...♕xa4†!

An unexpected combination! The result of the queen sacrifice is that White's king is totally isolated from his own army and surrounded, on the contrary, by Black's forces.

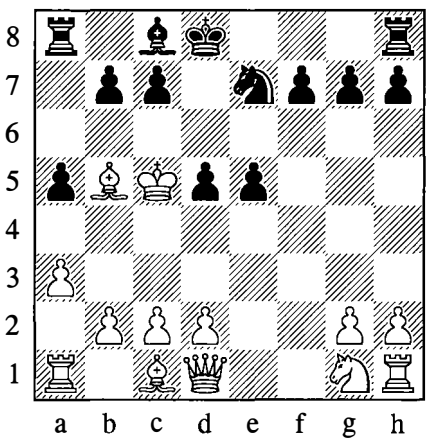
10.♔xa4 ♘c5† 11.♔b4 a5†

Black is obliged to sacrifice his knight too. Otherwise, after 12.a4, White will find a safe refuge for his errant monarch.

12.♔xc5 ♘e7

Black now threatens mate in 2 moves, with 13...b6† and 14...♗d7#.

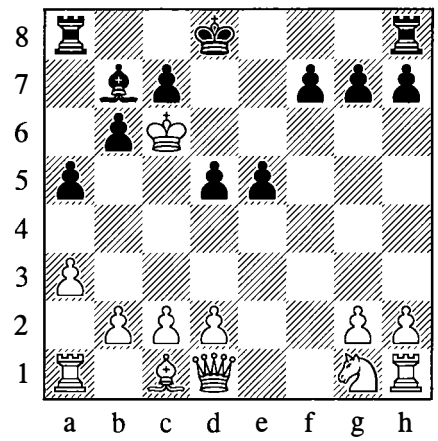
13.♗b5† ♔d8



14.♗c6!

The only move to save White from mate. Now in the event of 14...bxc6 15.♘f3 the mating net into which his king has fallen is torn open, after which his material plus will tell.

14...b6† 15.♔b5 ♘xc6 16.♔xc6 ♗b7†!



17.♔b5

Acceptance of *this* sacrifice is strictly prohibited: 17.♔xb7 ♔d7 18.♕g4† ♔d6, and White is mated.

17...♗a6† 18.♔c6!

He could still have been mated after 18.♔a4 ♗c4!.

18...♗b7†

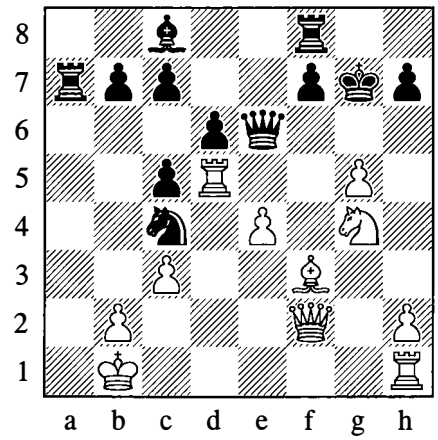
And the game ends in perpetual check.

½–½

So Black's queen sacrifice led to a draw. After sacrificing his queen he played in the best way possible, hence only one question remains to be settled: in the first diagram position, was there a better continuation than 9...♕xa4† at Black's disposal? In other words, was it *worth* sacrificing the queen to reach a drawn result? White was threatening to play ♘c3 and then ♔a2, after which the extra piece in his possession could have "asserted its rights". Against this, only two other replies were possible: 9...♗e6 and 9...d4. In the former case, 10.d4 is the refutation. Only 9...d4 remains to be considered, but then White has 10.♔a2 ♗e6† 11.b3. It follows that the queen sacrifice was the best solution for Black. Quite apart from the fact that in conducting the difficult defence White could have gone wrong and lost, Black was securing himself against defeat when he made the sacrifice.

J. Blackburne – G. Mackenzie

London 1882



White has just played 29.♕g2-f2? What followed was a combination with a queen sacrifice, culminating in a pretty and thematic mate.

29...♕xd5!

At that time Blackburne was already one of the world's strongest players. At the second congress of the German Chess Federation, held in 1881 in Berlin, he had taken first prize ahead of Zukertort, Winawer, Chigorin, Louis Paulsen and many other masters of the day. Nevertheless he failed to notice the threatened sacrifice of the queen!

30.exd5 ♗f5† 31.♕c2 ♖a1†! 32.♔xa1 ♗xc2

And White is mated next move.

0–1

H. Bird – A. Burn

Giuoco Piano
London 1886

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.b4 ♗b6 6.♕b3 0–0 7.d3 d6 8.♗g5 h6 9.♗h4 g5 10.♗g3

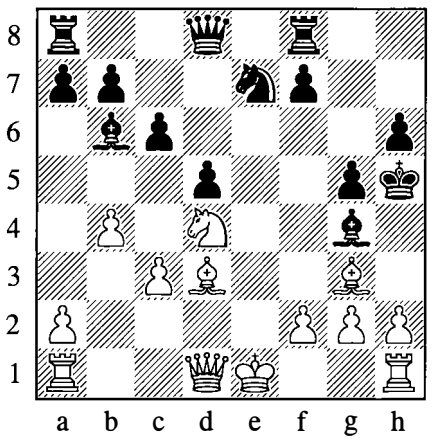
At first sight it looks as if White could obtain winning chances with the piece sacrifice 10.♘xg5. However, after 10...hxg5 11.♗xg5 ♗xf2†! Black would also have ample defensive resources.

10...♘e7 11.♘bd2 c6 12.d4 exd4 13.♘xd4 ♘xe4? 14.♘xe4 d5 15.♘f6† ♔g7 16.♘h5† ♔g6 17.♗d3†

White could also simply play 17.♗e2, but he has thought up a combination with a queen sacrifice.

17...♔xh5 18.♕d1† ♗g4

On 18...g4, White would quickly win by 19.h3.



19.♕xg4†

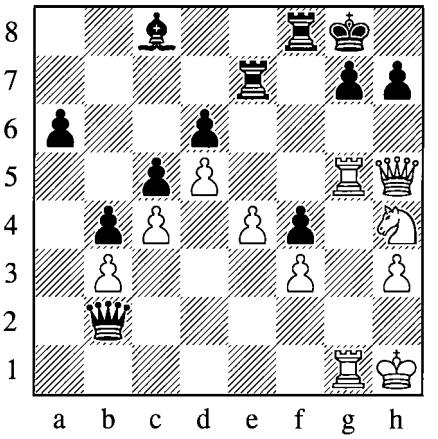
Quite a simple combination with a queen sacrifice, but the English Champion hadn't seen it. If he had, he would of course have resigned.

19...♔xg4 20.♗e2#

International tournament practice knows of a good many cases where combinations with a queen sacrifice were overlooked even by the classic practitioners of the art of chess. Here is one such example.

D. Janowski – C. Schlechter

London 1899



White's pieces are harmoniously directed against the kingside, and Black's king position is far from safe. White is threatening, for example, 34.e5 dxe5 35.d6 .♖b7 36.♕h6 e4 37.♖h5, after which Black is defenceless. The game continued:

33...♖ff7?

Played in order to answer 34.e5 with 34...♖xe5. However, this move allows White to execute a beautiful, decisive combination.

A better defence was 33...♕f6. White would gain nothing from an immediate 34.♘f5 ♗xf5 35.♖xf5 ♕c3 36.♖xf8† ♔xf8, seeing that 37.♕xh7 would be met by 37...♕xf3†.

On the other hand, if White plays 34.♔h2 to threaten that same sequence, together with some other attacking lines, Black secures his defences with the now playable 34...♖ff7.

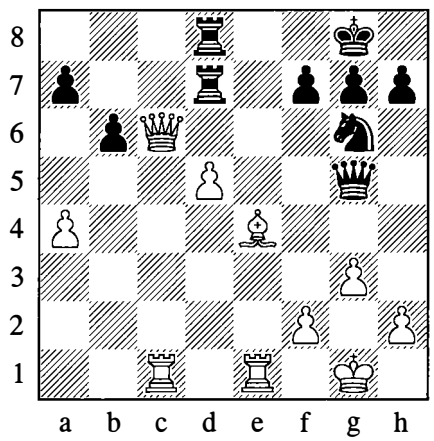
Schlechter was evidently so confused by all this that such an uncommon device as the sacrifice of a whole queen escaped his eye.

34.♕xh7†!! ♔xh7 35.♖h5† ♔g8 36.♘g6
Black resigned in view of inevitable mate.
1–0

Let us now consider queen sacrifices in the games of Alekhine. That outstanding Russian player greatly valued the aesthetic element in chess, and considered that it found its chief expression in sacrifices. The quantity of pieces that Alekhine sacrificed in the course of his career was immense. It goes without saying that the sacrificed pieces included the queen.

A. Alekhine – E. Colle

Paris 1925



The position seems clear, and there is nothing complicated about evaluating it. With material equality, White has a strong passed pawn; he controls open files, his king feels freer, and moreover it is his move. The positional advantage is undoubtedly on White's side; on the other hand it is quite hard to perceive that the board is full of concealed combinative motifs, one of which – indeed the most significant – is the unfortunate placing (as it turns out!) of the black queen.

29.♗xg6! hxg6
The most correct reply from the positional point of view.

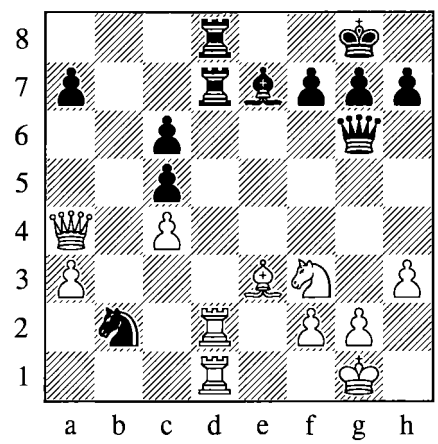
On 29...♕xg6, White has the combination 30.♕xd7.

On the other hand 29...fxg6 makes White's passed pawn truly dangerous, for example: 30.♕e6† ♖f7 31.♖c8 ♖xc8 32.♕xc8† ♖f8 33.♖e8! ♕f5 34.♖xf8† ♕xf8 35.♕c6, and to repel the threat of d5-d6, Black has to give up a pawn with 35...♕f3 36.♕a8† ♕f8 37.♕xa7 ♕d6. Still, in this endgame the struggle could still carry on for a long time, and Colle would of course have gone in for it if he had foreseen the consequences of his "obvious" move. As it was, a possible queen sacrifice from his opponent was the last thing he was thinking about.

30.♕xd7! ♖xd7 31.♖e8† ♔h7 32.♖cc8 ♖d8 33.♖exd8
1–0

A. Alekhine – R. Molina

Buenos Aires 1926



Black has just captured a pawn with 24...♘d3xb2, thinking that he has tricked his opponent, as 25.♖xd7 will be met by 25...♖xd7! 26.♖xd7 ♘xa4 – which is obviously in Black's favour.

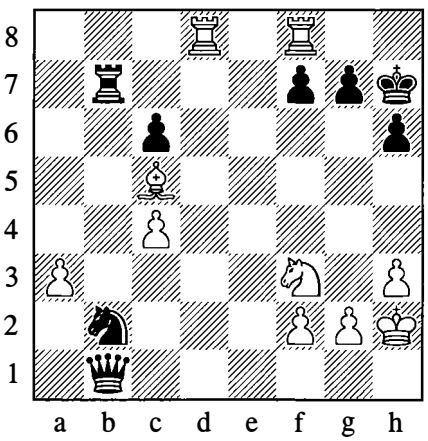
However, there followed:

25.♕xa7! ♖xa7?

Black accepts the queen sacrifice, after which he loses by force.

With 25...♘xd1 26.♖xd7 ♘xe3, Black would maintain the balance.

26.♖xd8† ♗f8 27.♗xc5 h6 28.♖xf8† ♔h7 29.♖dd8 ♕b1† 30.♔h2 ♖b7

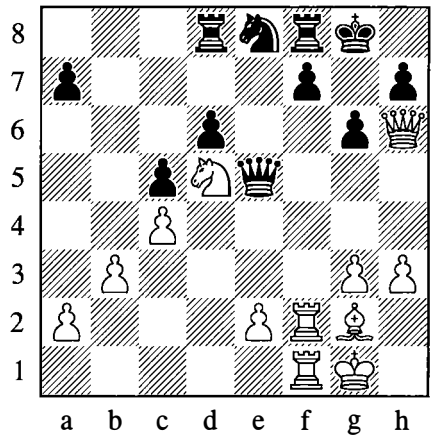


31.♘h4!

White's combination was based on this concluding move. Black resigned, as he will quickly be mated after 31...g5 32.♖h8† ♔g7 33.♖dg8† or 31...g6 32.♗d4.

1–0

In conclusion we will present two combinations that are similar in their ideas, motifs and themes; in both cases the queen was sacrificed on the very first move. As a result of the sacrifice, the king was driven out from behind its protective pawn chain; under the concerted blows of two rooks and a knight, it journeyed into the hostile camp to be surrounded by enemy pawns and pieces – and naturally it was mated.

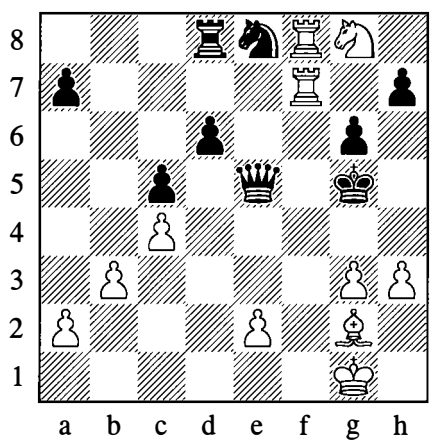


28.♕xf8†!

In this way White deprives the f7-pawn of its protection and opens the way for his rooks, acting in harmony, to mount a very strong attack against the enemy king. Of course White could also win by quieter means.

28...♔xf8 29.♖xf7† ♔g8 30.♘e7† ♔h8 31.♖f8† ♔g7 32.♖1f7† ♔h6 33.♘g8† ♔g5

33...♔h5 allows mate in two moves.



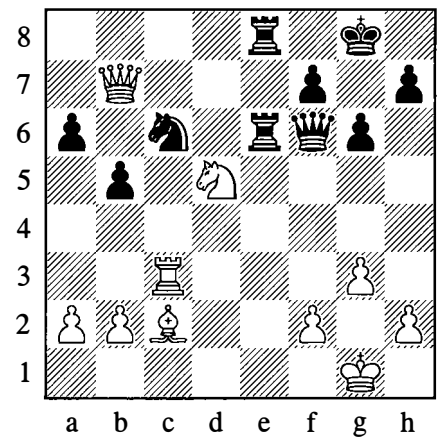
34.♔h2! ♕xe2 35.h4† ♔g4 36.♖f4† ♔h5 37.♔h3 g5 38.g4†

1–0

This idea – that of bringing the hostile king round to be your "guest", by means of a queen sacrifice – has already come a long way. The following combination is similar in its motifs, ideas and themes.

Kugenek – P. Romanovsky

St Petersburg 1912



Although Black is the exchange up, White has managed to stir up some complications. Black's queenside is weak, the position of his knight on c6 is insecure, and his queen is under attack. In a word, your first impression is that White holds the initiative. However, it is Black to move.

The game continued with:

30...♖e1†

At first sight the check deserves condemnation, as it removes a guard from the knight on c6. It is nonetheless correct, as we shall see from what follows.

31.♔g2 ♕xf2†!

A queen sacrifice that forces mate in a few moves.

32.♔xf2 ♖8e2† 33.♔f3 ♘e5† 34.♔f4 ♖f1† 35.♔g5 h6† 36.♔xh6 ♖xh2† 37.♔g5 ♖h5#

These last two combinations – to which, if we wanted, we could add some further examples with analogous ideas of drawing the king out into the open and persecuting it – definitely suggest that even in the field of combination, certain theoretical generalizations are possible. Our next chapter will be devoted to this issue.

Chapter 14

On the Theory of Combination – Typical Ideas

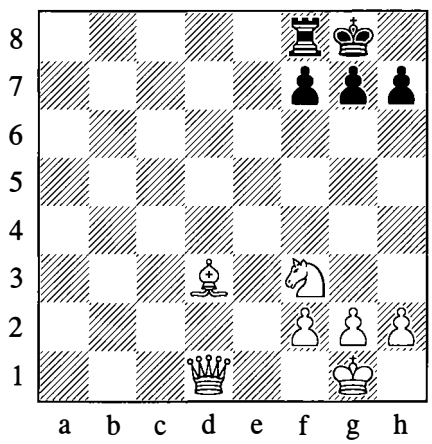
At the basis of a combination there is a creative idea. The genesis of the idea is the fruit of human intellect and fantasy. An impoverished creativity – a mind deficient in the fire of inventiveness and in panoramic vision – is usually unable to generate a profound and original idea, a work of artistry and beauty.

People sometimes ask whether there exists such a thing as a theory covering the purely creative aspect of chess – the realm of combination. Does this side of chess have a theory that is comparable in essence and stability (let us say) to the theory of endgames (with the "rule of the square", the opposition and so forth), or to that of the openings which has conclusively demonstrated the ineffectiveness (to say the least!) of such moves as 1.g4, 1.h4, 1...h5, 1..g5 and no doubt also some others? Of course such a theory exists. There is both a general theory of combination and a body of successful generalizations from combinative practice. Familiarity with this practice will permit any chess player to find his bearings in plenty of combinative situations.

The general theory of combination incorporates, first of all, a definition of combination itself and an examination of its constituent elements. To a certain extent the theory also embraces the methods of combinative thought employed at the chessboard. The tactics of combination, in other words the numerous technical devices that enable a combinative scheme to be fully implemented, should also be placed under the heading of the general theory.

There are numerous individual positions where the combinative ideas are of the same type; we are thinking particularly of cases where both the "motifs" and the "themes" are analogous. This has enabled us, by a method of generalization, to construct a theory covering a range of combinations that we can confidently call typical.

Let us take a detailed look at one such typical combination. Here is its schematic pattern:



The prerequisites for the combination (its "motifs") are the weakness of the point h7, which has only the king to defend it, and White's knight, queen and bishop which are ready for the attack (that is, favourably placed). The technique of the combination doesn't look complicated. By means of a bishop sacrifice on h7, White opens up the king's position, drawing the king out to h7 where it is exposed to a knight check. This places Black in an awkward dilemma – whether to advance his king into open space, or to retreat to a position where defending against the threat of mate will be a difficult and often impossible task.

The solution goes:

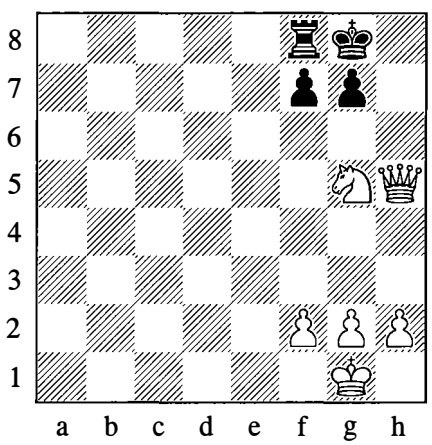
1.♗xh7† ♔xh7

Moving the king to h8 leaves White with both an attack and a material plus, but this is sometimes the relatively best expedient.

2.♘g5† ♔g8

In calculating the combination, White has to look as closely as possible into what happens if the king goes to h6 or g6; in these cases the usual continuation of the attack is 3.♕g4.

3.♕h5



Here is the typical position for this combinative scheme. In order to avoid immediate mate Black has to move his rook away, but then after 4.♕xf7† White's attack becomes decisive.

The following examples show how this well-known combinative scheme, though already brought to light around 300 years ago, finds application even in important games from twentieth-century international tournaments.

C. Schlechter – H. Wolf

Queen's Gambit
Ostend 1905

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e3 c5 4.c4 e6 5.♗d3 ♘c6 6.0–0 a6 7.♘c3 dxc4 8.♗xc4 b5 9.♗d3 ♗b7

This move, the automatic follow-up to Black's eighth, would already seem to be an inaccuracy that leads to his first difficulties.

By contrast, after 9...cxd4 10.exd4 ♘b4, with ...♗b7 to follow, Black would obtain a good game and thereby demonstrate the harmlessness of the opening system White has chosen.

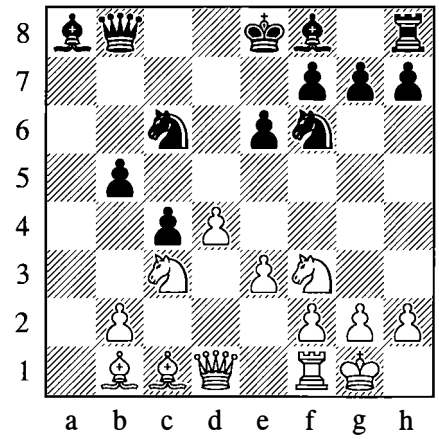
10.a4! c4?

And now, by removing his grip from the d4-point, he presents White with real combinative prospects based on an advance of the e-pawn.

The lesser evil was 10...b4 11.♘e4 cxd4 12.♘xf6† gxf6! 13.exd4 ♖g8, concentrating pressure of his own against g2.

11.axb5 a6xb5 12.♖xa8 ♗xa8 13.♗b1 ♕b8

White's advantage lies in his lead in development and in the fact that Black, strictly speaking, already has no time to ensure castling in safety.



14.e4!

Of course! White intends to drive the black knight away from f6 and thereby remove protection from the h7-point. If Black castles, then the attacking scheme we examined, with a bishop sacrifice on h7, can be put into action.

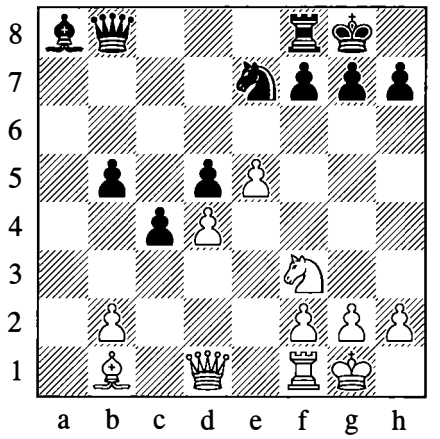
14...♗e7

Black walks towards the danger. He should have played 14...♘b4, but of course with his king in the centre his game would still not be easy.

15.♗g5 0–0

After this, everything proceeds "on oiled wheels". It's hard to imagine that Wolf could have forgotten all about bishop sacrifices against h7. It may have seemed to him that in these specific circumstances a defence would turn up for Black. If so, he was a victim of unjustified and barely explicable optimism.

16.e5 ♘d5 17.♘xd5 exd5 18.♗xe7 ♘xe7



We may have no doubt that Schlechter envisaged a position like this when he made his fourteenth move. What follows is a typical combination, known since the time of Greco (early in the 17th century).

19.♗h7† ♔h7

The "Greek gift" cannot be declined. The catastrophe would ensue even more quickly after 19...♔h8 20.♘g5 g6 21.♕f3 ♘f5 22.♗xg6.

20.♘g5† ♔g6

The best defensive resource, but inadequate.

On 20...♔g8, the continuation in keeping with the scheme is 21.♕h5 ♖e8 22.♕xf7† ♔h8 23.f4 with the irresistible threat of ♖f3.

Whereas if 20...♔h6, then 21.♕g4 ♕c8 22.♕h4† ♔g6 23.♕h7† ♔xg5 24.f4† ♔g4 25.♕h3#.

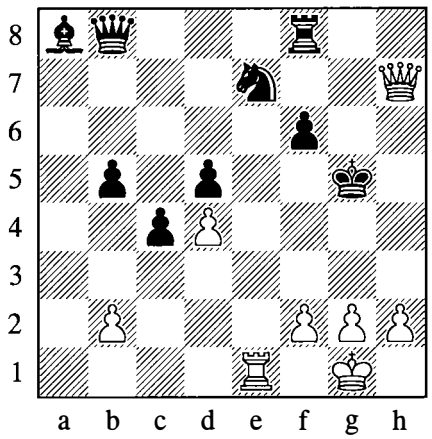
21.♕g4 f5

Nor is 21...f6 any help, as White replies 22.exf6 as in the game. But the threat of ♘e6† cannot be parried by any other means.

22.exf6 gxf6

On 22...♖xf6, White still plays 23.♘e6† ♔f7 24.♕xg7† ♔xe6 25.♖e1†.

23.♘e6† ♔f7 24.♕g7† ♔e6 25.♖e1† ♔f5 26.♕h7† ♔g5



27.♖xe7

Mate could be forced by: 27.h4† ♔g4 (27...♔f4 28.♕h5! and 29.♕f3# is inescapable) 28.f3† ♔g3 29.♕g7† ♘g6 30.♕xg6†and 31.♕g4#.

27...♖g8 28.♖e3 b4 29.♖g3† ♕xg3 30.♕xg8†
1–0

Let us look at another no less colourful game on the same theme.

G. Salwe – M. Vidmar

Queen's Gambit
St Petersburg 1909

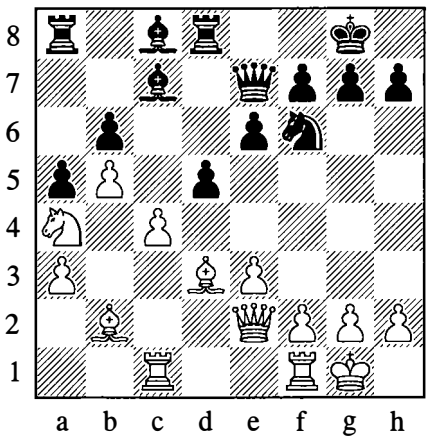
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.a3 ♗d6 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.b4 ♗d6 9.♗b2 0–0 10.♗d3 a5! 11.b5 ♘e5

Black's combinative plan is becoming clear. He exchanges off the white knight which currently prevents him from implementing the idea of a bishop sacrifice on h2.

12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♕e2 ♕e7 14.0–0 b6 15.♘a4 ♗c7 16.♖ac1

White stands quite well and has chances to take the initiative after executing the c4-c5 break. At the same time, however, he should be keeping an eye on the kingside situation, where the weakness of the h2-point constitutes a typical target for a combination involving a bishop sacrifice.

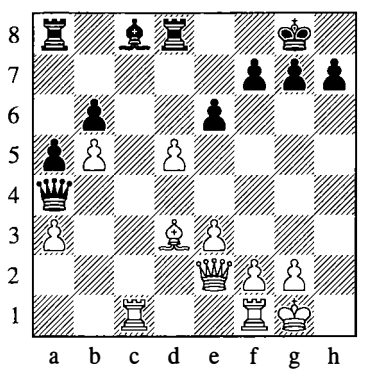
16...♖d8



17.c5

Routinely played, without concrete analysis. White gains nothing from this break in the short term, while on the other hand he is opening the way for Black to attack on the kingside after pushing his e-pawn.

In place of this last somewhat hasty "attacking" move, White should have played 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.cxd5. The complications would work out in his favour, thanks to the precarious position of Black's bishop on c7. In the event of 18...♗xh2† 19.♔xh2 ♕h4† 20.♔g1 ♕xa4 White is able to launch a powerful attack.



21.♗xh7†! ♔xh7 22.♖c4 ♕xa3 23.♖h4† ♔g8 24.♕h5 ♔f8 25.♕g5 f6 26.♖h8† ♔f7 27.♕h5† ♔e7 28.♖xd8 ♔xd8 29.dxe6 White is doing well; if Black removes the passed pawn with 29...♗xe6, the a8-rook falls to 30.♕h8†.

17...bxc5 18.♘xc5 ♗d6 19.♕c2 e5 20.a4

On 20.h3, Black could play 20...♗xh3 21.gxh3 ♖ac8.

20...♗g4!

Black threatens 21...♖ac8 22.♗a3 ♘d7.

21.♘b3

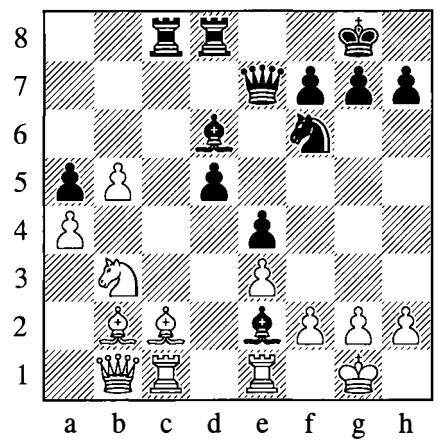
It was essential to play 21.♘a6, so that on 21...♖ac8 White could continue 22.♕d2 without fear of 22...♗b4. After the move in the game, the queen proves to be too far away from the centre of the action.

21...♖ac8 22.♕b1 e4 23.♗c2

White could play 23.♗xf6, but after 23...♕xf6 24.♖xc8 ♖xc8 25.♗c2 ♕h6 26.h3 ♗xh3, or 26.g3 ♕h3, his hours would be numbered just the same.

23...♗e2 24.♖fe1

And now if 24.♗xf6, then 24...♕xf6 25.♖fe1 ♗f3!, and White cannot save himself.



At last all the conditions are in place for a combination with a bishop sacrifice on h2, followed by an attack with queen and knight against the white king that has been escorted out of its "fortress".

24...♗xh2†! 25.♔xh2 ♘g4†

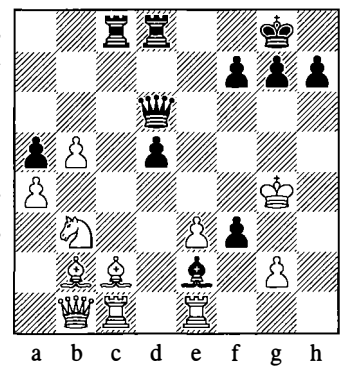
An inaccuracy in the execution.

25...♕d6†! would have won in short order, for example 26.♔g1 ♘g4 27.g3 ♕h6 and mate is imminent.

26. ♔h3

A more stubborn defence was 26.♔g3, since the "standard" continuation of 26...♕g5 27.f4 exf3? allows White to defend with 28.♗xh7† and 29.♕f5.

Instead Black would have to find this precise sequence of moves: 26...♕d6† 27.f4 exf3†! 28.♔xg4



28...h5† 29.♔h3 h4! 30.♔xh4 ♕h2† and Black has a decisive attack.

26...♖d6

The rook joins the attack for good measure.

27.♗xe4 ♖h6† 28.♔g3 ♕h4† 29.♔f4 ♕h2†

Black now mates in four more moves.

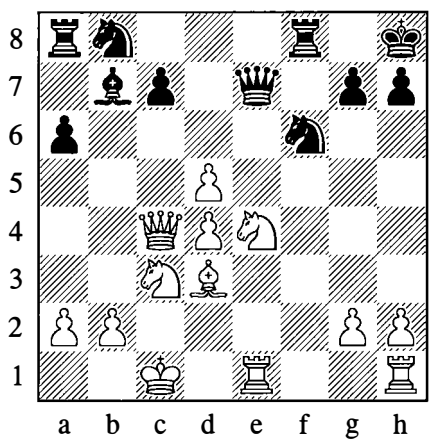
0–1

Another combinative idea that can be considered typical occurs when the enemy

king is shut in on the back rank by pawns of its own colour, and its position is exploited to gain a decisive material or positional plus, or sometimes to force mate. In such combinations the attacker's chief purpose is to divert the enemy pieces that are covering the back rank as defenders. These combinations may have various themes, but the one encountered most often is the theme of a double attack, as for example in the Bernstein – Capablanca game which is already familiar to the reader from Chapter 12. Both from that game and from the ones we shall consider next, we can also see what a strong aesthetic element resides in combinations of this type, even though at present, to a considerable extent, they are already becoming the stock-in-trade of theory. The history of this combination takes us back at least to the time of Morphy, but most probably it had been seen even earlier.

P. Morphy – A. Mongredien

Paris (6) 1859



Here Morphy's sharp combinative eye spotted a pretty combination on the theme of a double attack, motivated by the boxed-in position of Black's king and the undefended state of his bishop on b7. There followed:

19.♘xf6 ♕xf6 20.♖hf1 ♕d8 21.♖xf8† ♕xf8 22.♕b4

This double attack decided the fight.

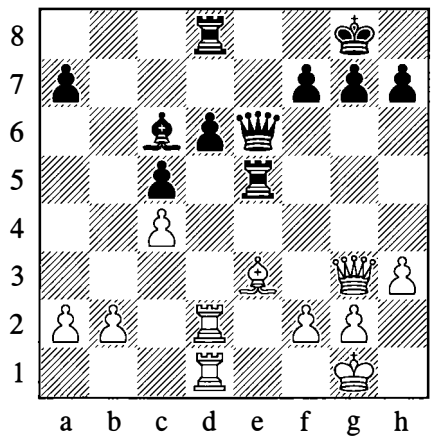
1–0

A possible combinative sequel is also interesting: 22...♘d7 23.♕xb7 ♖b8 24.♕xc7 ♕b4 25.♗b5 axb5 26.♕xb8† ♘xb8 27.♖e8† and mate next move.

In the following example, White ingeniously utilized the walled-in position of Black's king to win a pawn in highly favourable circumstances.

S. Tarrasch – Em. Lasker

World Championship (10)
Dusseldorf/Munich 1908



Black has a substantial positional weakness – the pawn on d6. White can win this pawn at once by continuing 25.♗f4 ♖e1† 26.♖xe1 ♕xe1† 27.♔h2. The d-pawn then falls, for 27...d5 is bad in view of 28.♗h6 g6 29.cxd5, when the bishop is under attack and White threatens ♕c3.

However, instead of 27...d5 in this variation, Lasker was probably counting on playing simply 27...♕e6 28.♗xd6 ♕g6. Black then obtains drawing chances, thanks to the opposite-coloured bishops.

Tarrasch obviously saw this too; the "drawish" line was a reef he had to steer round. The combinative solution that he unearthed exploited the black king's constricted position and quickly led to victory.

There followed:

25.♗h6!

Threatening mate – neither more nor less – and aiming to answer 25...♕xh6 with the decisive combinative stroke 26.♕xe5.

Black cannot now play 25...♖e1† 26.♖xe1 ♕xe1† 27.♔h2 g6, as mate is unavoidable after 28.♕c3.

25...♕g6

Black could also play 25...g6; White would still reply 26.♗f4 and pick up the d-pawn, having in the meantime achieved a weakening of the dark squares in his opponent's camp.

26.♗f4 ♖e6 27.♗xd6 ♕h5

A combinative "trap". On 28.♗e5?, Black wins the game by 28...♕xd1† 29.♖xd1 ♖xd1† 30.♔h2 ♖g6.

Undoubtedly 27...h5, as pointed out by Lasker himself, was better, but this could have done no more than prolong his resistance.

28.♕g4 ♕xg4 29.hxg4 ♖e4 30.♗xc5 ♖xd2 31.♖xd2 h5 32.♖d6
1–0

The following game can serve as a classic example of the exploitation of a constricted king's position as the leitmotif of a combination.

E. Adams – C. Torre

Philidor's Defence
New Orleans 1920

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 exd4

If, as we know we must, we set ourselves the opening task of fighting for influence in the centre, then of course 3...♘f6 should be preferred here. However, the exchange Black undertakes does not lead to any clearly bad results either; it merely makes it easier for White to formulate his game plan.

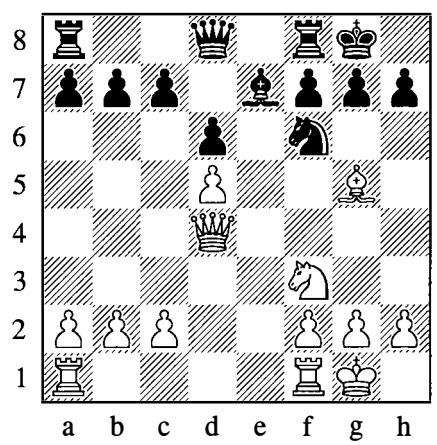
4.♕xd4 ♘c6

Some players would prefer 4...♗d7, here, so as to play ...♘c6 afterwards with tempo; but this isolated and none too weighty argument cannot serve as a criticism of the line Black selects. White would meet 4...♗d7 with 5.♗g5 ♘c6 6.♕d2, after which his control of the d5 outpost would secure him the better position all the same.

5.♗b5 ♗d7 6.♗xc6 ♗xc6 7.♘c3 ♘f6 8.0–0 ♗e7 9.♘d5

The position after move 8 had occurred before in tournament practice. Against Blackburne in the London international tournament of 1899, Pillsbury played 9.b3 here, which probably gives White more in the way of attacking chances.

9...♗xd5 10.exd5 0–0 11.♗g5



Relying on his better development and territorial advantage in the centre, White tries

to exert pressure on the only open file – the e-file. Nor has he any alternative; this plan arises out of the nature of the position.

11...c6 12.c4 cxd5

Black neglects the opportunity for a standard simplification: 12...♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♗xg5 14.♘xg5 ♕xg5 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.♕xd6 ♕b5, with equality.

13.cxd5 ♖e8 14.♖fe1 a5 15.♖e2 ♖c8?

A fatal error, allowing White to carry out a very pretty combination which has gone down in history as a resplendent model of the exploitation of a king blocked in by its own pawns.

Black should have created a "loophole" by playing 15...h6. This would have eliminated the two chief elements of White's combinative idea – Black's vulnerable king position and the theme of the double attack that follows from it. It should be noted, however, that after 15...h6 16.♗d2, and then 17.♗c3, White is still in firm possession of the initiative.

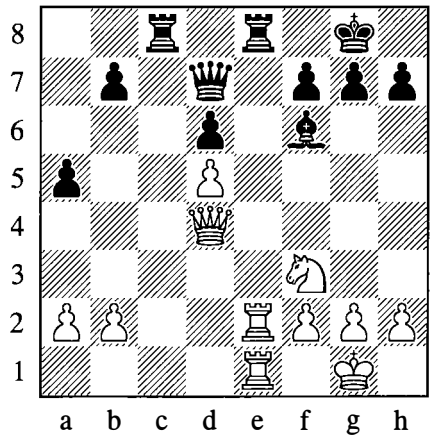
16.♖ae1 ♕d7 17.♗xf6

By narrowly positional criteria this doesn't look like a particularly profitable operation, and yet... it begins a combination, or supplies a prerequisite for it.

17...♗xf6

At this point Black could still elude the terrible combinative "scourge" by playing 17...gxf6. Then 18.♖xe7 would be unplayable in view of 18...♕xe7 (but not 18...♖xe7 19.♖xe7 ♕xe7 20.♕g4†) 19.♖xe7? ♖c1†, and it is Black who gives mate.

White would have to meet 17...gxf6 with 18.h3, threatening the combination just mentioned. Then on 18...♖c7 he would play 19.g4, and after the manoeuvre ♘f3-h4-f5 Black would be in a hopeless situation.



18.♕g4!

The twofold attack on e8 from the white rooks means that Black's rook on that square has to be kept defended by two pieces – his other rook and his queen. White just needs to divert the queen from the a4-e8 diagonal, or the rook from the back rank – and a checkmate with ♖xe8 will vividly demonstrate the theme of the combination. By repeatedly applying the technical device of diverting the enemy queen from the defence of e8, White will finally achieve his aim. Black will be confronted with the dire choice of parting with his queen or being mated.

Outwardly, the idea of evicting the queen from the key diagonal is executed in a most dramatic way. The white queen, itself unprotected and invulnerable, will twice place itself under attack from two of Black's major pieces. This combination has gone down in the history of chess art as one of the most aesthetically pleasing and impressive of creations.

18...♕b5

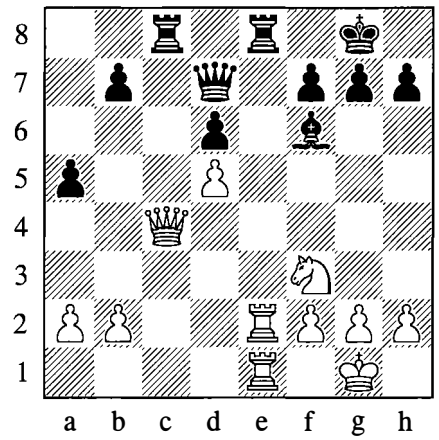
Now it is actually Black who is threatening the winning move 19...♕xe2, but...

19.♕c4!

Brilliant, but the next move of the combination is perhaps even more striking.

19...♕d7

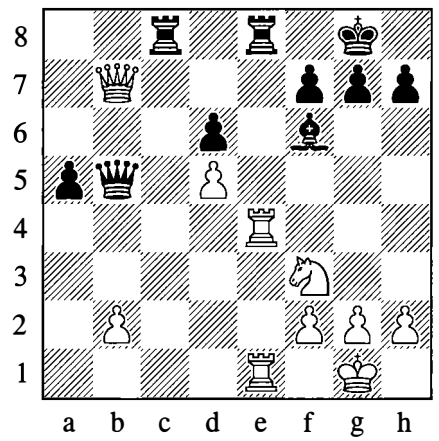
Obviously the only move.



20.♕c7! ♕b5 21.a4!

Not at once 21.♕xb7? on account of 21...♕xe2.

21...♕xa4 22.♖e4 ♕b5 23.♕xb7

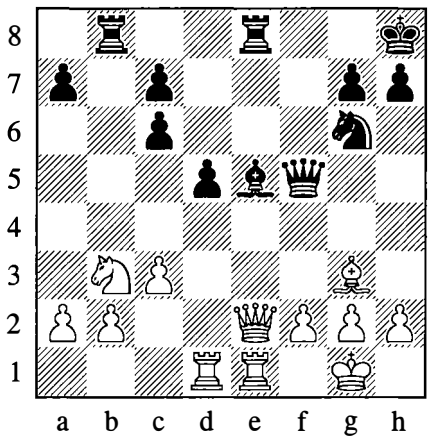


The fourth queen "sacrifice", crowning the combination. Black's queen cannot remain on the a4-e8 diagonal, which would be the indispensable condition for continuing the fight.

1–0

Combinations motivated by the enemy king's constricted position on the back rank are a frequent occurrence in chess practice. Here are a few more examples.

N. Pavlov – P. Romanovsky



Black has a slight advantage in the centre, but his queenside is weak. True, the position of the white queen opposite the black rook is unpleasant for White, but at the moment this circumstance has little significance. However, after ...♖e7 or ...♕d7 this opposition on the e-file might be charged with some real threats.

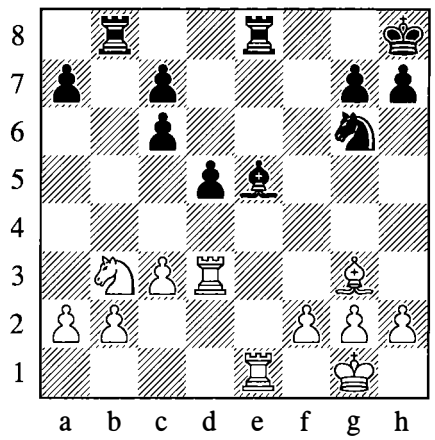
But the point is that White can play 21.♕a6! here. Black then has nothing better than 21...♗xg3 22.hxg3 ♘e5, after which White can capture the pawn on a7. Black's slight initiative scarcely compensates for this loss. In fact, White played:

21.♕d3?

White was anticipating the variation 21...♕xd3 22.♖xd3 ♗xg3 23.♖xe8† ♖xe8 24.fxg3, guaranteeing him a draw.

However, after 21.♕d3? a combinative possibility based on the enclosed position of White's king arises for Black. It is a good example of how a motif that is slight but nonetheless potentially substantial can suddenly become the decisive factor in the struggle.

21...♕xd3 22.♖xd3



22...♗xc3!

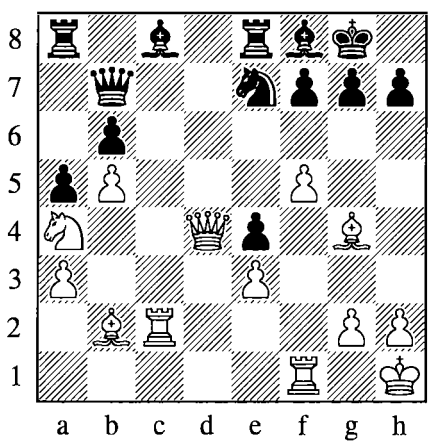
This leaves Black a pawn up and with a powerful group of pawns in the centre. The advantage was converted into a win in the endgame without difficulty.

...0–1

A subtly conceived and elegant combination, involving a long calculation, was carried out by Black in the following game.

N. Novotelnov – D. Rovner

15th USSR Championship semi-final
Moscow 1946



Looking at the structure of this position, you may find it hard to believe that the situation of White's king, shut in by its pawns, can already be utilized by a superb combination on the theme of a double attack, based on the idea of drawing White's pieces away from the defence of the first rank. The obligatory and decisive participation of the rooks – as in all combinations of this type – must be emphasized, although in the diagram position, for the moment, they are none too actively placed. This contrast between the visible situation of the rooks and their actual role bears witness to the depth of the combinative idea. The combination proceeded as follows:

24...♗xf5!

A sacrifice diverting the white rook from the back rank.

25.♗xf5?

If White had detected his opponent's intention in time, he would have played 25.♗h5. This maintains the balance, thanks to White's pressure against the pawns on b6 and f7.

25...♘xf5 26.♖xf5 ♖ed8 27.♕c4 ♖ac8 28.♕e2 ♖xc2 29.♕xc2 ♕c8!

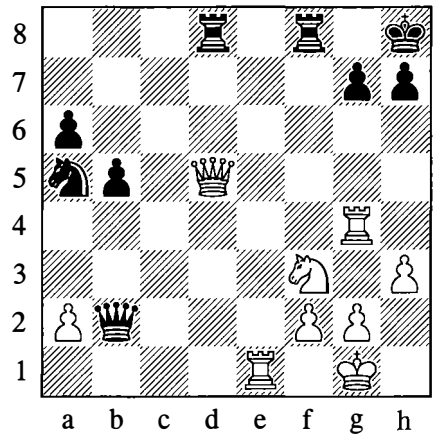
Now the theme of the combination – a double attack on c2 and f5 – is revealed. Unable to parry this attack, White loses a rook.

0–1

A very striking combinative attack was conducted by Tal in the following game. The idea of the attack was based on – or rather, arose out of – the motif of the black king confined on the vulnerable back rank. Lehmann defended quite ingeniously but could do nothing against Tal's subtle and precise exploitation of the said defect of Black's king position.

M. Tal – H. Lehmann

USSR – West Germany, Hamburg 1960



White's queen is en prise, and his knight is immobilized by the need to cover the f2 point. However there are plenty of open files on which the major pieces are operating, and the black king is boxed in. These combinative motifs suggested to Tal a beautiful solution of the problem:

25.♖f4!

White now threatens a very dangerous attack with 26.♘g5.

25...♕b4

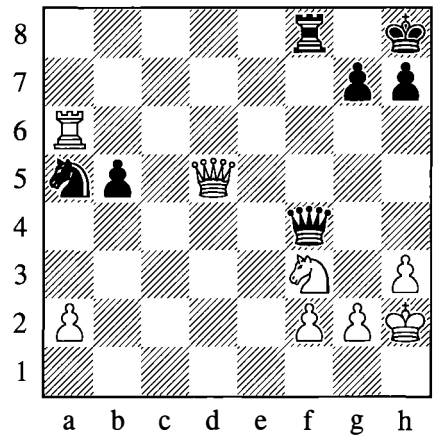
Pretty, but inadequate to repulse the attack.

The relatively best move was 25...h6, opening an air vent for the king. The continuation would probably be 26.♖xf8† ♖xf8 27.♕d6, attacking f8 and a6. On 27...♕f6, White maintains the initiative with 28.♖e6.

26.♖xf8† ♖xf8 27.♖e6!

Black cannot defend the a6-pawn, and moreover he has to worry about repelling the threat of an invasion by the white knight.

27...♕f4 28.♖a6 ♕c1† 29.♔h2 ♕f4†



30.g3!

Again a small combination on the theme of the king that is "short of air".

30...♕c4 31.♕d2

White's king is invulnerable, and he has an extra pawn and the initiative; his concluding attack is nevertheless worthy of attention.

31...♘b7 32.♖a7 ♘c5 33.♘e5 ♕f1

The queen puts itself out of play, making White's attack easier. A better move was 33...♕e4.

34.♖f7

Another method was 34.♘f7† ♔g8 35.♘h6† ♔h8 36.♖f7 ♘e6 37.♕f4 ♖xf7 38.♕xf7 gxh6 39.♕f6† etc.

34...♘e6

On 34...♖c8 White wins quickly with 35.♕d5, threatening both ♕xc5 and ♖f8†!.

35.♖xf8† ♘xf8 36.♕f4 ♘e6

Or 36...♘g6 37.♕f7.

37.♕f7 h6 38.♘g6† ♔h7 39.♘e7

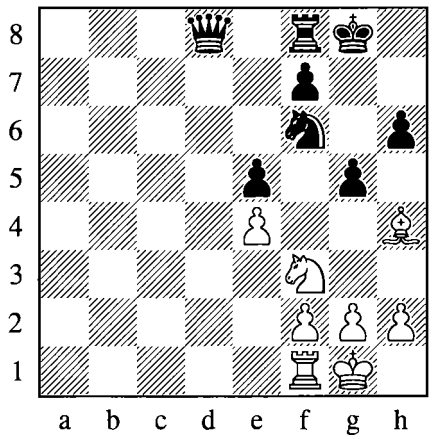
Black resigned. In the event of 39...♕xh3†, there would follow 40.♔g1 h5 41.♘f5, winning the black knight.

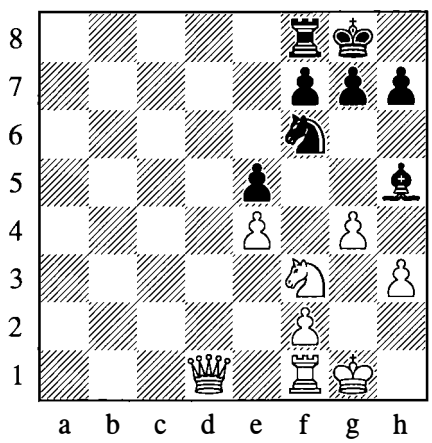
1–0

The question is sometimes asked why the player who has fallen victim to a combination with a back-rank mate didn't avert this possibility by playing one of the prophylactic moves ...g7-g6 or ...h7-h6 in good time. The answer to this somewhat naive question can be stated more or less as follows. In the chess struggle a major role is played by the element of time, measured in moves or tempos; so you should not play any moves "just in case", any moves whose motive is "to be on the safe side". This is why the moves ...g6 or ...h6, if played solely on the grounds that the king will otherwise be boxed in by its own pawns, cannot be said to serve a good purpose. Essentially such abstract prophylaxis can, and often does, prove a waste of precious time. In addition, the moves with the g- or h-pawn (...g6, ...h6; g2-g3, h2-h3) lead to a weakening of the castled position and can create new combinative motifs – as we shall later see.

The point is that the king "boxed in by its pawns", just like any other factor, needs to be viewed not abstractly but creatively, that is, in relation to the overall context of the struggle. In some circumstances the enclosed situation of the king is a plus, as it ensures the king's safety and offers the opponent no scope at all for combination. So a master will never play h2-h3 or g2-g3 merely as prophylaxis against threats of no real substance. On the other hand, in situations where these moves might be extremely useful owing to the mounting tactical tension of the fight, you don't always have time for them – the play is too sharp for you to "give the king a loophole". From the examples in this chapter we can see that even grandmasters can be victims of the standard type of combination we have been examining.

Let us now consider another stock combination with which there has been plenty of experience, but which nonetheless still crops up from time to time in contemporary practice. We are speaking of the sacrifice of a knight for two pawns in the following situation, which we present in schematic form.





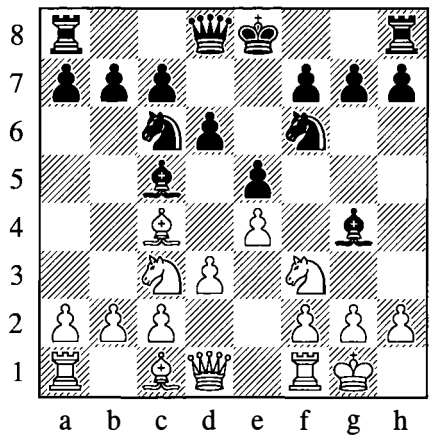
White continues 1.♘xg5 (from the second diagram Black correspondingly plays 1...♘xg4), and after 1...hxg5 2.♗xg5 the pin on the hostile knight is renewed. Making additional use of the exposed position of the enemy king, White has the chance to keep a strong initiative in his hands for a long time. The other player needs a high level of defensive skill to avoid defeat. Although cases where he does so have indeed occurred in the history of this combination, they are a good deal rarer than those where the initiator of the sacrifice concludes his attack successfully.

The following illustrations will show us how the attack develops when this combination is implemented.

G. Salwe – M. Chigorin

Giuoco Piano
3rd Russian Championship, Kiev 1903

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.0–0 ♗g4



Black threatens 7...♘d4, which he will still play in answer to 7.♗e3.

The pin against the knight on f3 is hampering White – but he could play 7.h3 ♗h5 8.♗g5, with threats of his own in the shape of g2-g4 and ♘d5. After 8...h6 9.♗xf6 ♕xf6 10.♘d5 ♕d8 11.c3, White has a fully satisfactory game.

The line that Salwe selects parries the immediate threat (...♘d4), but its weak side is that it doesn't solve the key problem of the pin on the knight.

7.♗b5? 0–0 8.♗e3

A more consistent move was 8.♗xc6, but in that case some arithmetic would be pertinent. White would have made three moves with his king's bishop (♗f1-c4-b5xc6), just in order to exchange it for a knight that had only moved once. Such loss of time in the very opening stage is on no account to be recommended, but then it was 7.♗b5 that constituted White's transgression.

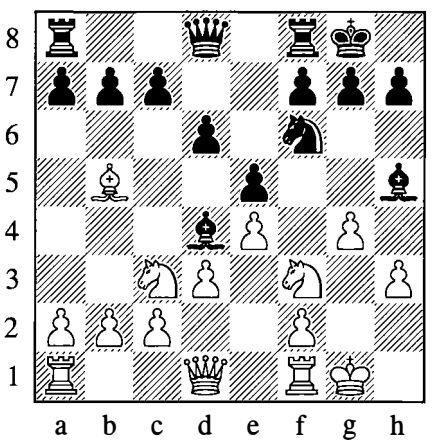
8...♘d4!

Now the bishop on b5 is left isolated from the main scene of the fight, while the problem of the pin on the king's knight arises with new urgency.

9.♗xd4 ♗xd4 10.h3 ♗h5 11.g4?

White's position is worse, but he had no grounds for such a provocative course of action. He could fight against the pin by continuing 11.♕e2 and preparing to regroup with ♘c3-d1-e3. In the event of 11...♗xc3 12.bxc3, he would achieve the freeing of his knight by ♕e3.

On the other hand, Black would retain a positional advantage after 11...c6! 12.♗c4 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♕a5.



Now Black executes the combination that we indicated in our theoretical scheme.

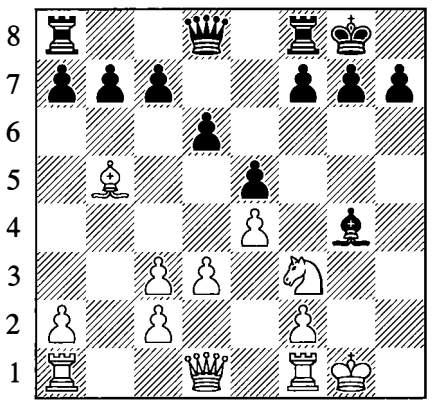
11...♗xc3

He could also play the immediate 11...♘xg4 12.♘xd4 exd4 and:

a) 13.♘d5 ♘e3! (or 13...♕h4!) 14.♕xh5 ♘xf1, and now 15.♖xf1 c6, or 15.♗a4 c6 16.♘f4 ♘d2! and by threatening both ...b5 and ...♕g5†!, Black emerges the exchange up.

b) 13.hxg4 dxc3 14.bxc3 (not 14.gxh5 cxb2 15.♖b1 ♕g5† and ...♕xb5) 14...♕g5 15.♗d7 ♖ad8 16.♗f5 g6 and Black has a clear advantage in view of White's exposed king and weak pawns.

12. bxc3 ♘xg4 13.hxg4 ♗xg4



We may say that this is a position on a standard pattern. If, however, White's queen were on e2 or his king on h1, he would have the possibility of disputing the correctness of Black's knight sacrifice – in the former case by ♕e3, in the latter by ♖g1 (compare the Nimzowitsch – Marshall game, given below). With the present version of the typical structure, Black's threat of ...f7-f5 makes his attack irresistible.

14.d4

White aims to unpin the knight with 15.♗e2 in his effort to stem the attack.

14...f5 15.♗e2 fxe4 16.♘d2

This knight retreat hastens White's doom, but even after 16.♘h2 ♗h3 17.♔h1 ♗xf1 18.♕xf1 ♕h4 19.♔g1 ♖f6 he could not have saved the game.

16...♗xe2 17.♕xe2 ♕g5† 18.♔h1 ♖f4 0–1

In the following game between Maroczy and Janowski, Black's knight sacrifice on g4 is carried out in a much more complex setting. Comparing the initial stages of the two games, we can quite easily detect some similarity in the opening plans. Both Salwe and Maroczy refrained from immediate attacks on the centre (d2-d4). They both had light-squared bishops that were stationed on the queen's wing and proved to be largely inactive pieces. The players on the Black side in these games reacted to White's slow procedure by pinning the knight on f3 (...♗g4), then after h2-h3 and g2-g4 they sacrificed a knight on g4. Thus we observe that the quiet, "solid" mode of action, which aspires only to bolster the centre (d2-d3) without containing within itself the germ of a lively initiative, does not prevent but rather facilitates the hatching of combinative schemes on the opponent's part.

On this subject we would like to take the opportunity to repeat once again the advice we are systematically presenting in the pages of this book: the best way of thwarting your opponent's combinative enterprise lies in activity of your own. Salwe and Maroczy were both badly at fault in this respect and incurred fully deserved retribution.

G. Maroczy – D. Janowski

Ruy Lopez
Ostend 1905

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.d3

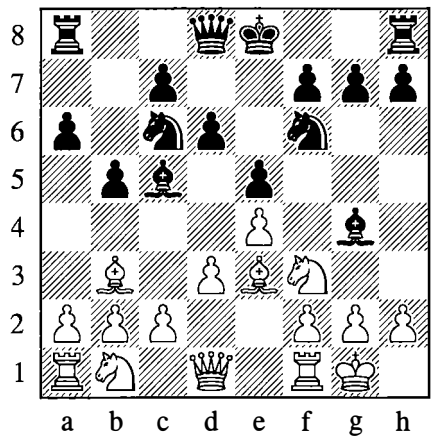
Apart from this, the quietest continuation, White has at least three active possibilities: 5.d4, 5.♗xc6 and 5.0–0. Nor should such moves as 5.♘c3 and 5.♕e2 be ignored – they too can form a basis for organizing active play in the centre.

The motives for the "solid" move chosen by Maroczy may be sought in various quarters, even in the tournament situation at the moment when the game was played. To all appearances Maroczy was not out to sharpen the play against his temperamental opponent.

5...♗c5 6.0–0 d6 7.♗e3

After due preparation White does after all intend to start an offensive in the centre and play d3-d4.

7...b5 8.♗b3 ♗g4



A pin that reduces White's pressure after d3-d4. At the same time Black provokes his opponent into h2-h3 and g2-g4. To rid himself of the pin by other means, White needs some lengthy manoeuvres, which will be dangerous given the active placing of Black's pieces. White is right to concentrate on carrying out the d3-d4 advance. In this light, however, his 5th move calls for criticism.

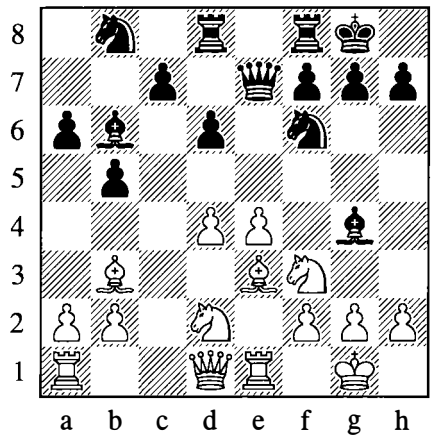
9.c3 ♕e7 10.♘bd2 ♖d8 11.♗d5 ♘b8 12.d4 exd4!

A sharp and far-sighted reply.

13.cxd4 ♗b6 14.♗b3

Timidly played! White has no need to be afraid of the capture on d5. He could usefully play 14.♕c2, freeing himself from the nagging pin.

14...0–0 15.♖e1



15...c5!

Black now seizes the initiative. Exchanging on c5 is not good for White, and he is forced to push his attacked pawn forward. But then Black obtains the important e5-square for his knight, as well as a mobile pawn mass – three against two – on the queenside.

As events now unfold, the pin of the f3-knight becomes more and more troublesome.

16.d5 ♗a5!

Black frees his c-pawn to advance, pins White's other knight and finally sets up a direct threat of ...♘xe4 (if then ♗g5, Black has ...♕xg5!).

17.♗c2 ♘bd7 18.h3 ♗h5 19.♗f4

On 19.g4, Black could carry out the combination 19...♘xg4 20.hxg4 ♗xg4. Then 21.♗f4? would be unplayable in view of 21...♗xd2 22.♗xd2 ♘e5. So White should prefer 21.♗d3, to transfer this bishop to e2, in which case the situation would remain double-edged.

19...c4 20.♖e3 ♗b6 21.♖e1

The rook manoeuvre has the purpose of unpinning the knight on d2. White is of course agreeable to a repetition of moves.

21...♘e5! 22.♗xe5

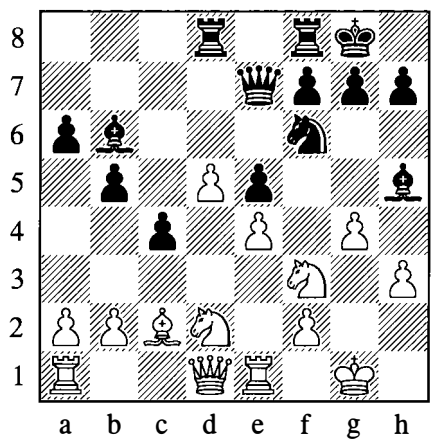
The knight on e5 is not to be tolerated, but now the black bishop on b6 becomes twice as formidable a piece.

22...dxe5 23.g4

This move is out of keeping with White's cautious, circumspect play in this game. Nor is it based on any conviction that Black's attack after 23...♘xg4 can be repulsed. Evidently Maroczy has simply come to the conclusion that his position is unsatisfactory, and that if he tries provoking his opponent into sacrificing a piece, this may be his best chance to save the day. To a certain extent, it seems to us that he is right.

After 23.♘f1 ♗g6 24.♘g3 ♘h5 (...♘e8-d6 is also strong) 25.♘xh5 ♗xh5 26.g4 ♗g6, White would be left in a very difficult position.

From the point of view of these psychological factors, 23.g4 may be regarded almost as a forced continuation.



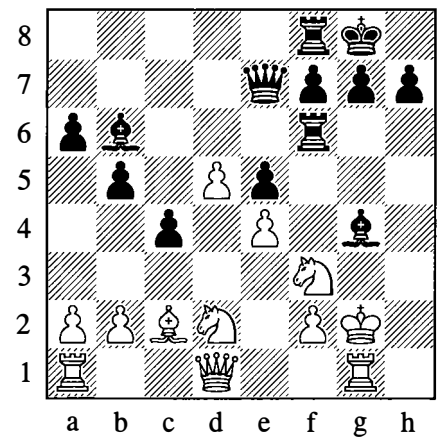
23...♘xg4

We have not given this move an exclamation mark for the simple reason that Black had several strong options.

The straightforward 23...♗g6, threatening ...h5, is also good. If White replies 24.♘h4, then 24...♘xd5 25.♘xg6 fxg6 26.exd5 ♖xf2 gives Black an irresistible attack. True to his style, Janowski could not choose that course – whereas Rubinstein or Schlechter, or even Capablanca, *would* probably have played 23...♗g6.

The best continuation of all is 23...♗xg4! 24.hxg4 ♘xg4, followed by ...♖d6. White's position then collapses even more quickly than in the game.

24.hxg4 ♗xg4 25.♔g2 ♖d6 26.♖g1 ♖f6



27.♕e1

With the obvious purpose of bringing the bishop to d1, to join the defence of f3.

On 27.♔f1, which looks better, Black could continue with 27...h5.

27...♖f4!

White has no defence against 28...f5 29. exf5 ♗xf3† 30.♘xf3 e4.

28.♔f1 ♗xf3 29.♘xf3 ♖xf3 30.♖g2 ♕h4

31.♔g1

Or 31.♔e2 ♕h5, and Black wins.

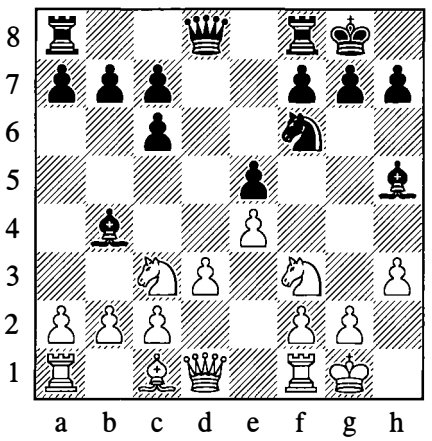
31...♖h3
0–1

In both the games we have just given, the knight sacrifice proved justified, but we should not conclude from this that the idea of unpinning the knight by h3 and g4 (...h6 and ...g5) is unsound in itself. Unpinning the knight requires preparation which Salwe and Maroczy did not manage to carry out. In our next example we shall see the knight sacrifice on g4 suffering a fiasco.

A. Nimzowitsch – F. Marshall

Four Knights Game
San Sebastian 1912

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗b4 5.0–0 0–0 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.d3 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗h5



9.♔h1!?

The preparatory move!

If 9.g4 at once, then 9...♘xg4 10.hxg4 ♗xg4 and Black's attack is extremely dangerous, as ...f5 is threatened.

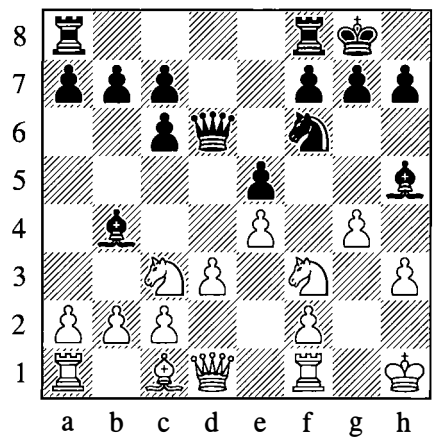
9...♕d6

Black cannot prevent the move g2-g4, and after playing it White will be threatening the active manoeuvre ♘c3-e2-g3-f5. Nimzowitsch executed this plan with success more than once in his games.

Therefore instead of the queen move with its highly obscure purposes, Marshall might have played 9...♗xc3 and then ...♘d7, followed by ...♖e8 and the transfer of the knight to e6.

10.g4

If Nimzowitsch had thought that the knight sacrifice on g4 would be a danger to him, he would have played a preliminary 10.♖g1. For the consistent implementation of his plan, this would actually have been the most logical continuation.



10...♘xg4

Even with the white king on h1, Black is not risking a great deal by sacrificing his knight for two pawns. In any case, he is assured of re-establishing material equality.

10...♗g6 is also playable. White would then like to bring his queen's knight to f5, but the direct 11.♘e2 temporarily leaves White's pieces very awkwardly placed. This gives his opponent the opportunity for a promising sacrifice with 11...h5 12.g5 ♘xe4!?, or the quieter 11...♖ad8, threatening ...♘xe4.

A safer approach for White is 11.♕e2, aiming to achieve his goal with ♘c3-d1-e3-f5.

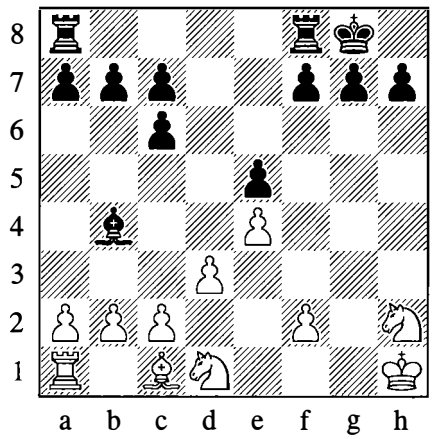
11.hxg4 ♗xg4 12.♖g1 ♕g6

On 12...f5, White would simply play 13.exf5. But now Black is threatening to check on h5, so White's reply, strictly speaking, is forced.

13.♖xg4

13.♖g3 is dangerous in view of 13...♕h5† 14.♔g2 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 f5, and the defence becomes difficult for White.

13...♕xg4 14.♘h2 ♕xd1† 15.♘xd1



For two knights Black has a rook and two pawns, which at worst can be counted as material equality. It follows that the knight sacrifice has justified itself in the present game too, but as Black lost in spite of this, we may be permitted to give a few more moves.

15...f5?

In an excellent position Black unexpectedly gives himself an isolated pawn and, most importantly, furnishes his opponent's knights with a firm stronghold on e4. All this for the sake of an imaginary attack on the f2-pawn and perhaps even the dream of creating new threats to the king. As a result of Black's superficial move, the initiative passes to White.

16.exf5 ♖xf5 17.♗e3 ♖af8

Even now Black could have offered serious resistance with 17...h5, and if 18.♘f1 then 18...h4. Instead he makes a routine move, the knight settles on e4 unhindered, and White's advantage becomes decisive.

18.♘f1 ♖h5† 19.♔g2 ♖h4 20.♘g3 h5? 21.f3

On top of everything else, Black's rook is now stuck.

21...♗e7 22.♘e4

Black was soon forced to give up the exchange, though he laid down his arms only on the 46th move.

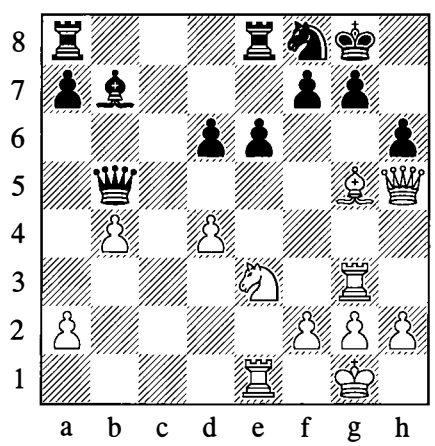
...1–0

We have considered three types of standard combination, but the theory of combination is not of course confined to these.

Standard themes include that of the smothered mate and the play associated with it, which we examined earlier. Another standard combination is the so-called "seesaw" (or windmill), which was implemented in the following well-known game.

C. Torre – Em. Lasker

Moscow 1925



25.♗f6 ♕xh5 26.♖xg7† ♔h8

Now by repeatedly moving from g7 to give discovered check, the rook regains the sacrificed material with interest. It is this combinative form of cooperation between rook and bishop that has acquired the picturesque name of a seesaw.

27.♖xf7† ♔g8 28.♖g7† ♔h8 29.♖xb7† ♔g8 30.♖g7† ♔h8 31.♖g5† ♔h7 32.♖xh5 ♔g6 33.♖h3 ♔xf6 34.♖xh6†

And White easily exploited his extra pawns.

...1–0

This combination is so striking in its effects and so vivid in its contours that it causes players to keep an extremely close watch on their g7-square (or g2) when facing the concerted attacks of rooks and bishops. For all that, seesaw combinations do now and again find a place even in tournament practice.

In the course of the remaining chapters of this book, the reader will come across some more combinations which by reason of their content may be assigned to the realm of theory. On the overall question of the relation between chess theory and the elements of combination, we may say that theoretical investigations and generalizations are most closely bound up with what we have called the *motifs* of combination. There are hardly any motifs which the thoughts of chess players have not disclosed and investigated. Combinative "themes" are also easily susceptible to theoretical study. On the other hand, on the subject of "ideas", theory is as yet unable to say much. If some ideas have been able to be generalized and in some way classified, thousands of them still remain outside the orbit of theory, for ideas are rarely found to be repeatable.

Chapter 15

Modern History of Combinations – The Immortal Game – Masterpieces from the End of the 19th Century

Until the 19th century and during the first 30-35 years of its course, combinations were the fundamental creative device of the chess struggle. Even Philidor, who pioneered the first positional ideas, was essentially an outstanding exponent of combinative methods of play.

It was not until the 1840s that many concepts of positional play, and the planning that was based on those concepts, were introduced into the chess processes by the progress of chess thought. The chess masters of that time, first of all the Englishmen Staunton, Wyvill and Williams, and then the Germans – Von der Lasa, Bilguer and a little later Louis Paulsen – proved to be shrewd and subtle advocates of positional principles in practical play. At the same time, however, they all assimilated the legacy of history and had an excellent command of the resources of combination. By blending the latter with their positional principles, they acquired a weapon that rendered helpless those representatives of chess art for whom the concept of "a chess game" was equivalent to that of "combinative play".

If players were to continue winning with the combinative weapon, it needed to be significantly renovated and perfected. This process of renovation stood out in a particularly striking manner from roughly the middle of the 19th century – in other words from about the time of the first international tournament, which took place in 1851 in London. The contest ran its course under the banner of positional chess. Neither the brilliant combinative thinking of the winner Adolf Anderssen, the distinguished master from the German chess school, nor the elegant and bold play of the Hungarian Szen could alter the tournament's basic positional character, upheld by such pillars of English chess as the trio – Staunton, Williams, Wyvill – who occupied the next places after Anderssen.

And this even happened in spite of the fact that the prelude to the tournament had been stunningly combinative in character. We are speaking of the encounter between Anderssen and Kieseritzky that took place on the eve of the tournament and has gone down in chess history under the name of "The Immortal Game". It is this very game that we have chosen as the point of departure for our survey of the history of combination in the second half of the 19th century. It may be useful for the reader to know that in many publications (manuals by Euwe, Reti and Emanuel Lasker; N.I. Grekov's magazine *Shakhmaty*) the score of this game is reproduced inaccurately, with moves in the wrong order. It should also be borne in mind that the game, which lasted about an hour and a half, is to be classed as a "friendly". The profundity of the combinative ideas which Anderssen executed in it deserves all the greater esteem.

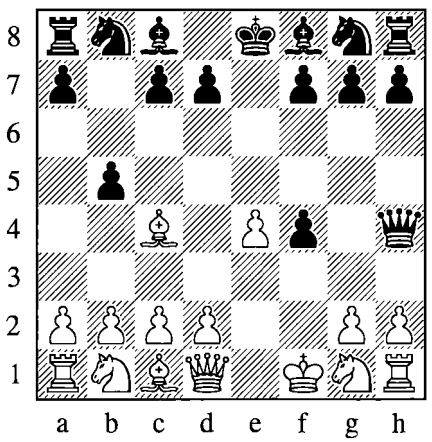
A. Anderssen – L. Kieseritzky

King's Gambit
London 1851

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♗c4

The King's Gambit, at that time at least, led to lively combinative play. Together with the Evans Gambit it was Anderssen's favourite opening.

3...♕h4† 4.♔f1 b5



This counter-gambit has some points in its favour: the white bishop is diverted from its strong position onto an undefended square, and Black gains a tempo to develop his own queen's bishop. Yet the struggle was to develop in such a manner – a tragic one from Black's viewpoint – that neither of these circumstances had any part to play.

5.♗xb5 ♘f6 6.♘f3 ♕h6

Here the queen is too restricted in its scope.

A more promising line would seem to be 6...♕h5, and if 7.♕e2 then 7...♕xb5 8.♕xb5 ♗a6. If we can speak of any advantage at all for White in this variation, it is only an insignificant one.

7.d3 ♘h5

Black is threatening to check on g3.

At this point 8.♔g1 fails to 8...♕b6†. However, 8.♖g1 is not inferior to the continuation Anderssen selects.

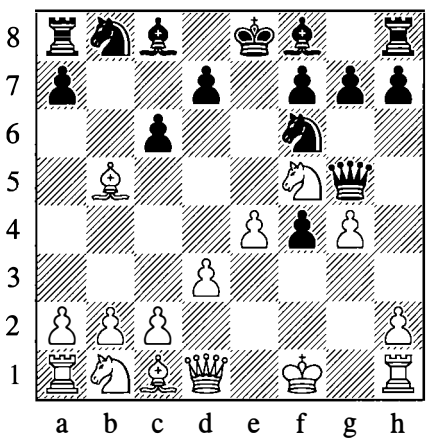
8.♘h4 ♕g5

A double attack. Black is reckoning on 9.♘f5 c6, when either retreat of the bishop is met by 10...d5 with the initiative. But Kieseritzky has overlooked one circumstance which, admittedly, is not easy to spot even in a serious game.

A better move was 8...g6.

9.♘f5 c6 10.g4 ♘f6

Black had also taken this position into account. What is White to do now? On 11.♗a4, Black plays 11...g6 and then ...♘xg4, with an obvious advantage.



11.♖g1!

Chigorin, who tended to be rather sparing in his praise, calls this rook manoeuvre a stroke of genius and gives Anderssen's combinative move a double exclamation mark. He judges it to be a rare case! Anderssen's idea is indeed most profound, and Kieseritzky cannot be blamed for failing to fathom it in its entirety.

11...cxb5

If Black plays 11...♘xe4? 12.dxe4 cxb5, then White wins by 13.♕d5 with the double threat of taking the rook or winning the queen by ♘d6†.

An interesting point is that White can also win with the simple 12.♕e2, after which Black must lose a piece (at least – for a dangerous initiative also remains in White's hands).

[Editor's note: According to the analyses of Kasparov and Hübner, Black ought to choose between 11...d5 and 11...h5!?, with unclear play.]

12.h4 ♕g6 13.h5 ♕g5 14.♕f3 ♘g8

For the sufferings that have fallen to his lot, Black wants at least to keep his extra material. A legitimate wish!

15.♗f4 ♕f6 16.♘c3 ♗c5

Black cannot defend against the knight's incursion on d5. If for example 16...♘e7, then 17.♘d6† ♔d8 18.e5.

Kieseritzky's move is bad all the same, as it deprives the g7-pawn of protection. It is all the worse since the simple reply 17.d4 makes utter nonsense of the aggressive intention of Black's sortie. By way of excusing moves like this, we can only note that they usually result from a player's realization that his situation is hopeless. Indeed no fully satisfactory continuations are to be found for Black.

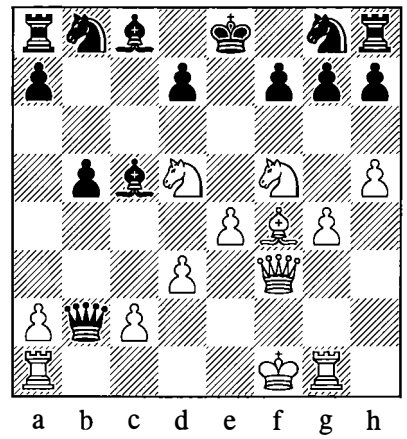
On 16...♗b7, White plays 17.♘xb5 with threats of ♘d6† and ♘c7†.

The relatively best move is 16...♘a6, but even then, by continuing 17.♗d6! with the threat of e4-e5, White obtains a winning attack. Clearly 17...♗xd6 is unplayable on account of 18.♘d5 ♕e5 19.d4. On the other hand if 17...♗b7, then 18.g5 ♕e6 19.♘xb5, with the unanswerable threat of ♘bd4.

17.♘d5

Apart from 17.d4 which was just mentioned, White could win here with 17.♗d6, threatening g4-g5 or e4-e5. Black is then helpless, for on 17...♗xd6 White has the decisive 18.♘d5.

17...♕xb2



18.♗d6?

Full of combinative potential, but not the best.

The more restrained 18.d4 or 18.♖e1 offered surer routes to victory.

18...♗xg1?

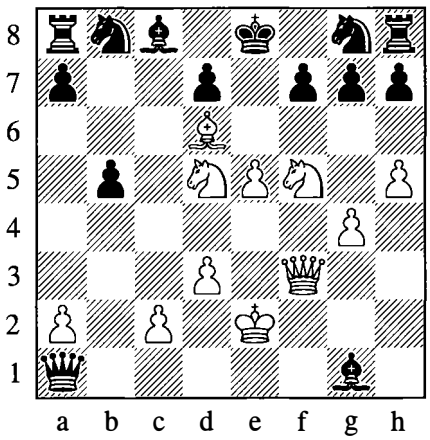
The bishop cannot be taken because of mate in four moves.

Numerous annotators of this historic game have pointed out that after 18...♕xa1† 19.♔e2 ♕b2 Black would have had chances to save himself. After 20.♔d2 ♗xg1 21.e5 ♗a6, White's initiative is sufficient only for a draw. The position of the king on d2 and the queen on b2 gives Black extra tactical resources. Thus in Chigorin's main line (quoted in the note to Black's 20th move), after White's ♕xa8 Black would have a bishop check on a5 to rescue him.

19.e5!

Cutting the queen off from the g7-point (an "interference" device) and preparing the final queen sacrifice.

19...♕xa1† 20.♔e2



White is threatening mate in two moves with 21.♘xg7† and 22.♗c7#, and also a mate in three: 21.♘xg7† ♔d8 22.♕f6†! ♘xf6 23.♗e7#. It is only the former threat, as the more obvious, that Kieseritzky detects and parries.

20...♘a6

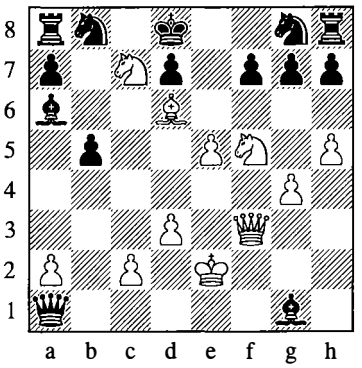
Defending c7, but allowing mate from the other direction.

Black may try to defend by moving his queen's bishop, the idea being to free the c8-square for the king. One move with this aim is 20...♗b7, but this is unsatisfactory in view of 21.♘xg7† ♔d8 22.♕xf7. Then the only way Black can defend against the threatened 23.♕e8# is by moving his king's knight, but wherever it goes, White forces mate by 23.♘e6†.

The best defence, as indicated by Steinitz, was:
20...♗a6

However, even then Black should lose, as demonstrated by the following analysis, of which the main variation derives from Chigorin.

21.♘c7† ♔d8



22.♘xa6!

Now as well as threatening 23.♕xa8, White also threatens 23.♗c7† and now 23...♔c8 24.♘d6# or 23...♔e8 24.♘d6† ♔f8 25.♕xf7#.

22...♗b6

Or 22...♕c3 23.♗c7† ♕xc7 24.♘xc7 ♔xc7 25.♕xa8 ♗c5 26.♘d6 ♗xd6 27.exd6† ♔c8 28.♕xa7.

23.♕xa8 ♕c3 24.♕xb8† ♕c8 25.♕xc8† ♔xc8 26.♗f8! ♔b7

If 26...♘h6, then 27.♘d6† ♔d8 28.♗xg7 with the threefold threat of ♗f6#, ♗xh6 and ♗xh8.

While 26...h6 is met by 27.♘d6† ♔d8 28.♘xf7† ♔e8 29.♘xh8 ♔xf8 30.♘g6† ♔f7 31.♔f3, and the exploitation of the extra pawn presents no difficulties here.

27.♗xg7

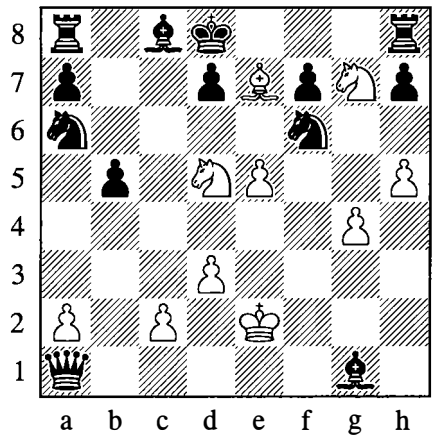
Another way to win is 27.♘b4 h6 28.♘d6† ♔b8 29.♘xf7 ♖h7 30.♔f3, and the king penetrates to g6 unhindered.

27...♔xa6 28.♗xh8 h6 29.g5 hg 30.h6

And White wins the knight.

So even if Kieseritzky had chosen the best defence at this point, Black's game was not to be saved. From the aesthetic viewpoint, Anderssen's combinative intuition created a genuinely immortal work of chess art.

21.♘xg7† ♔d8 22.♕f6†! ♘xf6 23.♗e7#



An economical "pure" mate, following the sacrifice of queen, two rooks and a bishop – whereas not one of *Black's* pieces has been driven from the battlefield. This too contributes to the game's immortality.

Anderssen's immense combinative talent earned him worldwide acclaim. His game with Kieseritzky was followed shortly afterwards by the one with Dufresne which was dubbed "The Evergreen" on account of the beauty of its crowning combination. Anderssen succeeded in executing many a beautiful combination in other games too.

For all that, we should note that he was no longer a child of his time, and this is how we must explain why his glory as a competitor was comparatively short-lived. Anderssen was not in step with chess history. At that time, chess thought was undergoing intensive development, directed towards the formulation and deepening of theory, the perfection of technique. Positional thinking – about the planning of the game, about structural weaknesses – was evolving. Questions of improving the methods of defence, primarily against combinative attacks, were placed on the agenda.

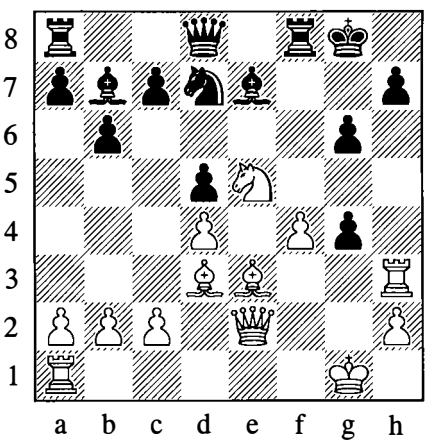
Of course, whether he liked it or not, Anderssen was forced to master the elements of positional planning, but his heart and mind belonged to the world of combinative ideas until the end of his life. The result of this was that in 1858 he lost by a wide margin to the young American Morphy, who possessed both combinative talent and a subtle understanding of the positional struggle.

In 1866, Anderssen lost a match to the young Steinitz, the future World Champion. Like Morphy, Steinitz possessed a great combinative gift and relatively good playing technique. Objectively, at that time, Anderssen was stronger than Steinitz, but he underestimated his opponent and conducted some of the games, especially in the middle of the match, in too risky a style (the final score was +8 –6 in Steinitz's favour).

The name of Steinitz, the future author of the doctrine of positional play (see Part One of this book), made its entry into the chess world as the name of an outstanding combinative player. The following combination by the young Steinitz was highly esteemed by Anderssen himself.

W. Steinitz – A. Mongredien

London 1862



Black has just answered 15.g4 with 15...fxg4?,

which falls right in with White's combinative scheme. Black should instead have played 15...♘xe5, intending 16.fxe5 f4 or 16.dxe5 ♗c8, after which he could still have defended successfully. So to be honest we must point out that Steinitz succeeded with his combination after an outright error on Mongredien's part. Could this have been the occasion that gave rise to Steinitz's mistaken assumption that any combination can be forestalled? That was what he asserted when he later came to construct his positional theory.

In answer to 15...fxg4, there followed:

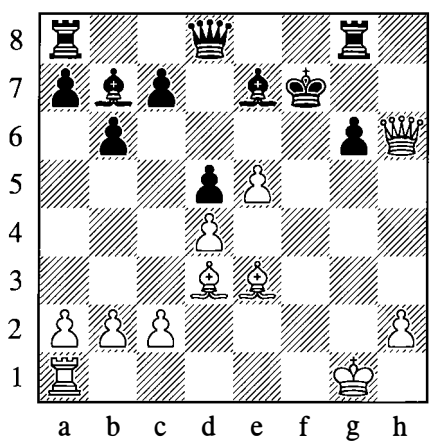
16.♖xh7!

[Editor's note: Kasparov shows that there was a simpler win in 16.♕xg4, leaving Black unable to avert strikes against g6 or h7.]

16...♘xe5 17.fxe5 ♔xh7 18.♕xg4 ♖g8

Another branch of the combination, which Steinitz had foreseen, goes: 18...♕e8 19.♕h5† ♔g8 20.♗xg6 ♖f7 21.♔h1 ♗f8 22.♖g1 ♗g7 23.♗h6 and wins.

19.♕h5† ♔g7 20.♕h6† ♔f7



21.♕h7†

This check contains the fine point of the combination.

The obvious-looking 21.♖f1† ♔e8 22.♗xg6†? would allow the black king to escape after 22...♔d7.

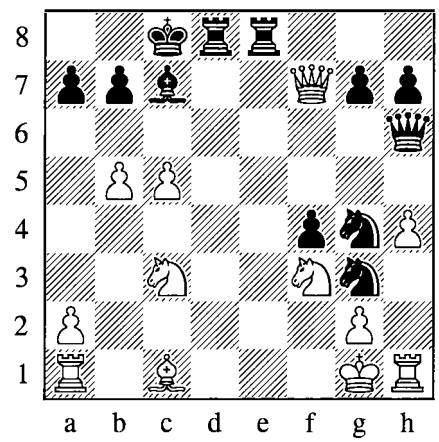
21...♔e6 22.♕h3† ♔f7 23.♖f1† ♔e8 24.♕e6 ♖g7 25.♗g5 ♕d7 26.♗xg6† ♖xg6 27.♕xg6† ♔d8 28.♖f8† ♕e8 29.♕xe8#

Steinitz's scheme is beautiful in both content and execution.

The years 1860-80 were a period when the positional principles were developed further, while the art of combination in its old, Italian spirit gradually waned. We will now look at a number of combinations carried out during that period; they will help us to discern how combinative ideas evolved. The evolution was stimulated by refinements in the methods of evaluating a position on new foundations; it responded to the need to take account of the enhanced role of defence, and also to the theory of exploiting positional weaknesses.

C. Mayet – J. Zukertort

Berlin 1868



Mayet has obviously not been able to utilize the combinative motifs that the King's Gambit contains for White, and has come away empty-handed as a result. Mating themes are

hanging in the air, given that White's king is in a helpless state, surrounded by enemy pieces. Zukertort solves the tactical problem with a pair of minor combinations that involve sacrificing his queen:

20...♕d6! 21.♗a3

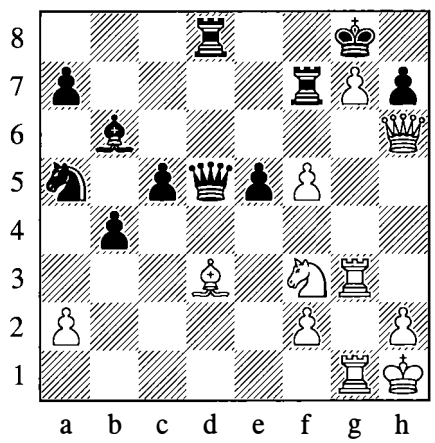
21.cxd6 ♗b6† is mate next move.

21...♕d3 22.♘d5 ♕f1†! 23.♖xf1 ♘e2#

It was with this combination that the mating theme with two knights in such a setting was implemented for the first time. The combinative idea – transferring the queen from h6 to f1 – makes an impression by its suddenness and the manner of its execution.

A. Anderssen – J. Zukertort

Barmen 1869



Anderssen was a great connoisseur and lover of the Evans Gambit. In this game he succeeded, by a bold attack, in obtaining a position where the final beautiful combination proved impossible to prevent.

White threatens to force mate in three moves with 29.♕xh7†, one point being that after 29...♔xh7 the mate will be achievable in two ways: 30.♖h3† and ♖h8#, or 30.g8=♕† and ♖h3#. This second threat is the reason why moving the rook away from f7 is useless as a defence.

How then *is* Black to defend? Alas, he has *no* defence, so that this example alone refutes Steinitz's contention that any combination can be averted.

28...♕d6 29.♕xh7†!

Zukertort resigned, in view of: 29...♔xh7 30.f6† ♔g8 31.♗h7†! ♔xh7 32.♖h3† ♔g8 33.♖h8#

1–0

The following game between two German masters in the Romantic mould is interesting for the scale of the combination. The reader will see a whole series of mating threats, and the defending side's king will perform a forced march all the way across the board.

C. Göring – J. Minckwitz

Staunton Gambit
Wiesbaden 1871

1.d4 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 e6

In this position 4...c6 has been seen more often in practice, but the organic defect of that continuation is the delay in developing both wings. Minckwitz's move is at any rate no worse.

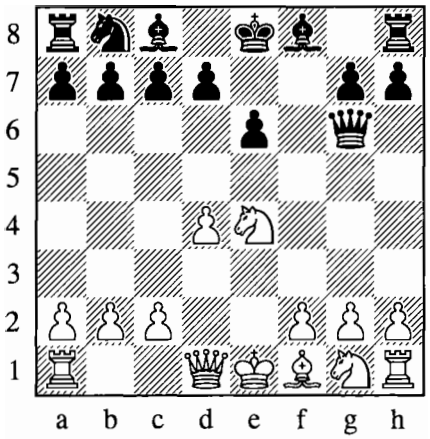
5.♗xf6

After 5.♘xe4 ♗e7 6.♗d3 ♘xe4 Black obtains comfortable equality.

5...♕xf6 6.♘xe4 ♕g6

By attacking the knight Black wants to gain a tempo, but this move is not good. Even the simple 7.♘g3, with ♗d3 to follow, leads to an advantage for White.

The correct move for Black is 6...♕h6, after which it isn't easy for White to make use of his lead in development.



7.♗d3

The start of a fine combination that stretches over many moves, accurately and deeply calculated. Of course Black is not obliged to fall in with it by capturing on g2. Even now it was worth thinking about moving the queen to h6, notwithstanding the loss of tempo. But evidently Minckwitz didn't perceive the full extent of his opponent's grandiose scheme. He was only reckoning on 7...♕xg2 8.♘g3 ♕d5. It is true that Black would have no easy life even then, but after playing 6...♕g6 last move, he decided to carry on consistently.

7...♕xg2 8.♕h5† g6 9.♕e5! ♕xh1

Black could try 9...♗b4† 10.c3 0–0, although after 11.♘f6† ♖xf6 12.♕xf6 ♕xh1 13.0–0–0 White's attack remains dangerous.

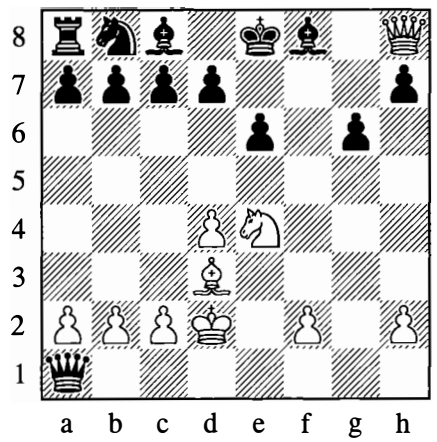
10.♕xh8

Saving the g1-knight with 10.♔e2! may be stronger. One point is that if Black tries to save his rook by 10...♖g8 11.♘f6† ♔f7, then the knight enters the game decisively with 12.♘h3!.

10...♕xg1† 11.♔d2 ♕xa1?

Now everything will proceed on forced lines.

Keeping his queen in play with either 11...♕g2 or 11...♕xh2 would give Black real chances to offer successful resistance, although with his queenside pieces in "cold storage" it would not be easy for him.



12.♘f6† ♔f7

On 12...♔e7, the main line of the combination goes: 13.♘d5†!! exd5 14.♕xh7† ♔f6 15.♕xg6† ♔e7 16.♕g5† ♔f7 17.♗g6† ♔g8 18.♕xd5† ♔g7 19.♕f7† ♔h6 20.♕h7† ♔g5 21.f4† ♔xf4 22.♕h4† ♔f3 23.♗e4#

If in this variation Black plays 17...♔g7, there follows 18.♗e8† ♔h7 19.♕g6†! ♔h8 20.♕h5† ♔g7 21.♕f7† ♔h8 22.♕xf8† ♔h7 23.♕f7† ♔h8 24.♕f6† with a rapid mate.

13.♕g8† ♔xf6

On 13...♔e7, White again plays 14. ♘d5†!.

14.♕xf8† ♔g5 15.f4†!.

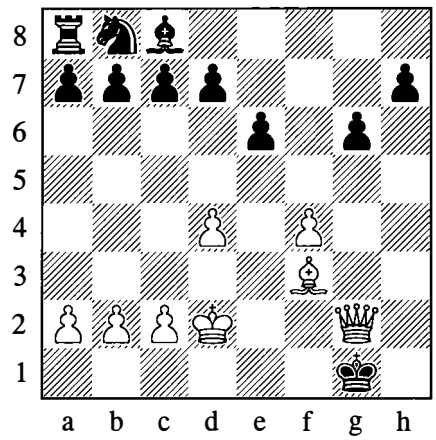
Mate could have been forced even more quickly with 15.h4† ♔g4 (otherwise White mates in two) 16.♗e2† ♔h3 17.♕f3† ♔h2 18.♕g3† ♔h1 19.♗f3#. This minor slip on Göring's part is perhaps the sole blemish on his combination, which his contemporaries hailed as brilliant.

15...♔g4 16.♗e2† ♔h3 17.♕h6† ♔g2 18.♕g5† ♔xh2 19.♗f3 ♕f1 20.♕h4† ♔g1

Or 20...♕h3 21.♕f2†.

21.♕g3† ♕g2† 22.♕xg2#

Let us record the final position.



This whole astounding combination involves more than twenty thematic mates, each more beautiful than the last.

A most spectacular combination occurred in the game Hampe – Meitner, Vienna 1870, in which Black achieved a draw (see Chapter 13). White's accurate defence to the combination should be noted. In the period we are examining, that game was one of the last to be played in a purely combinative spirit, but the increasing role of defence is to be felt in it.

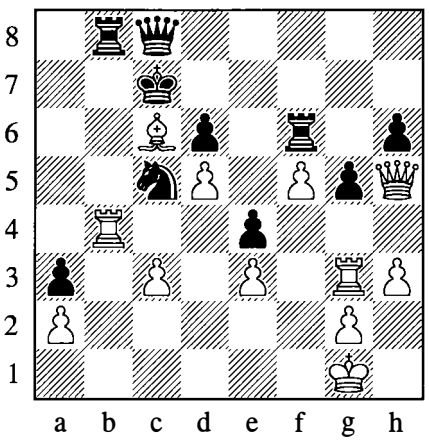
In the 1880s the majority of games embodied the processes of positional warfare, sometimes of quite a dour character, in which open lines and weak points were already widely exploited, and a tendency towards manoeuvring and generally cautious play made its first appearance.

The period of the 1880s and 90s is characterized by numerous combinations with a basis in the new strategy, in a purposeful game plan and positional manoeuvres. The demand that a combination should be absolutely correct was added to the aesthetic criteria. The beauty of combinations became more profound, as the combination itself ceased to be a self-sufficient factor and became a logical component in the positional planning of the game. Combination was no longer a product of style but inevitably accompanied all kinds of chess processes. It became organically fused, so to speak, with the creative thinking of the contestants, and entered a new historical stage of its development, which could be called the systematic or, still more precisely, the positional stage.

We will begin our survey of this period with a very beautiful combination that occurred in the following game.

J. Mason – S. Winawer

Vienna 1882



White is two pawns up, but several factors would appear to be doing something to balance the game: the very active placing of Black's knight on c5; the weakness of the white pawns on f5, c3 and a2; and Black's strong forward posts on e4 and a3. The decisive element, however, is the insecurity of the black king and the powerful position of White's bishop; and this spurs White to look for a combination. There followed:

40.♖xg5! hxg5 41.♕h7† ♘d7

On 41...♔d8, the continuation could be 42.♕h8† and White wins easily after 42...♔c7 43.♕xf6, or 42...♔e7 43.♕g7† ♖f7 44.f6†.

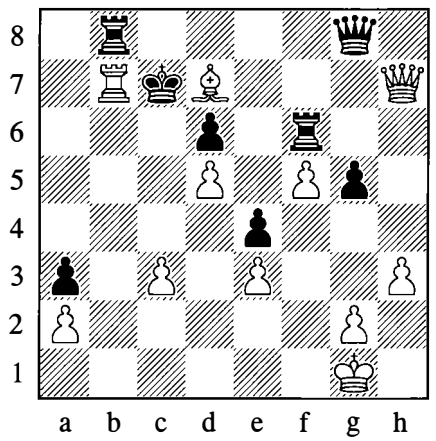
42.♗xd7 ♕g8

After 42...♕xd7 43.♖c4† ♔d8 44.♕h8† ♕e8 45.♕xf6†, White wins quickly.

But the continuation chosen by Winawer meets with an extremely elegant refutation.

43.♖b7†!!

With this sudden, beautiful rook sacrifice, two combinative devices are amalgamated in one move: the black rook is diverted from defending the queen, or else the king is drawn onto the light square b7, making a double check possible.



43...♔xb7 44.♗c8†!

By obstructing the eighth rank, White wins the queen and with it the game.

44...♔a8 45.♕xg8

Black soon resigned.

...1–0

In a game from this same event, Winawer was able to demonstrate a model defence against a combinative attack by the future World Champion Steinitz. We should mention that these two players finished equal first in the tournament. The game in question is from the play-off of two games to decide first and second prizes, in which the contestants scored one win each.

W. Steinitz – S. Winawer

French Defence
Vienna 1882

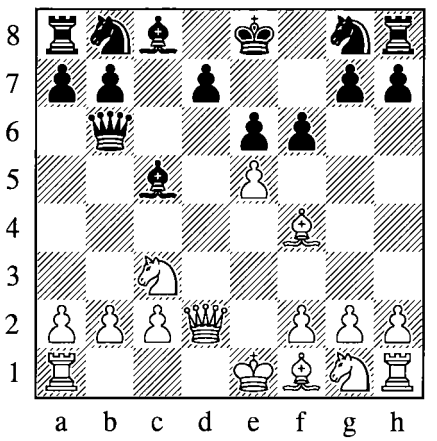
1.e4 e6 2.e5

An ancient continuation, which cannot be refuted by simple methods. In practice, at any rate, it has brought White many an interesting victory.

2...f6 3.d4 c5 4.dxc5

In Pollock – Tarrasch, Hastings 1895, White played 4.♗d3 here, and on 4...f5 he continued 5.g4! with a good initiative.

4...♗xc5 5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.♗f4 ♕b6 7.♕d2



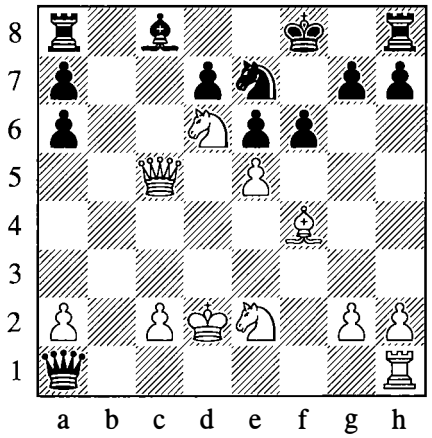
7...♗xf2† 8.♕xf2 ♕xb2 9.♔d2! ♕xa1 10.♘b5 ♘a6 11.♘d6† ♔f8 12.♗xa6 bxa6 13.♕c5

White has acquired a dangerous initiative for the exchange.

13...♘e7 14.♘e2

An interesting combination. Steinitz was of course well acquainted with the double rook sacrifice carried out by Göring. The idea of isolating the opponent's queen in this way is entirely legitimate when his king is insufficiently protected and under attack. But

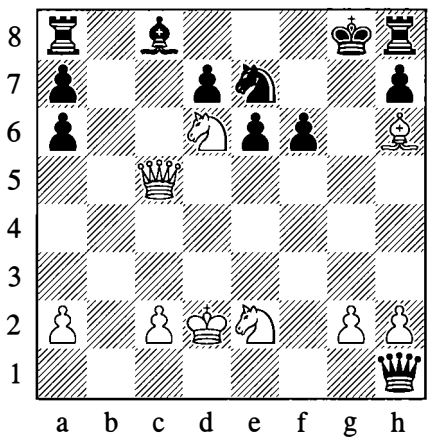
as the further course of the game will show, Steinitz had not calculated his combination to the end.



14...♕xh1 15.exf6 gxf6 16.♗h6†

After 16.♕h5 ♘g6 17.♕h6† ♔g8 18.♘e8! ♔f7 19.♘d6† the game would have ended in a draw by repetition.

16...♔g8



17.♕d4

This move is based on a miscalculation. Here is Steinitz's own explanation for his error: he had overlooked that after 17...♕xh2 18.♕xf6, Black would take the knight on d6 with check.

White should have played 17.♘e4, and if 17...♔f7 then 18.♘d6† with a draw.

The continuation 17.♘f5 is also of some interest; Black's only reply is 17...♘g6. He can then meet 18.♘f4 with 18...♕xh2 – after which there is no decisive continuation of White's attack, while Black has a very significant material plus.

17...♕xh2

Winawer's defence accords with all the rules of chess art. He will meet 18.♕xf6 with 18...♕xd6† and 19...♘f5.

18.♗f4 ♕h5! 19.♕xf6 ♘d5 20.♕d8† ♔g7 21.♕a5 ♘xf4 22.♕c3† e5 23.♘xf4 ♕g5 24.g3 ♖f8 25.♘e4 ♕e7 26.♘d5 ♕e6 27.♘c7 ♕h6†
0–1

In this game Winawer demonstrated how far the art of defence had developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. As we pointed out earlier, this led to an enhancement of the combinative art itself. The combinations not only became more refined, correct and rich in content, their artistic value increased.

Next we give five games, from the period 1883-96, containing combinations that can be called veritable masterpieces.

J. Zukertort – J. Blackburne

English Opening
London 1883

1.c4

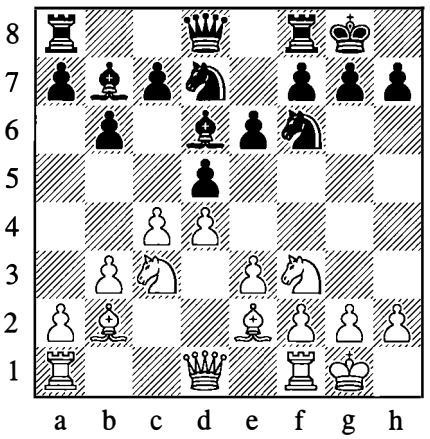
This emphatically positional opening had been widely practised by the English masters at the first London international tournament in 1851. Hence the opening's name.

1...e6 2.e3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 b6 4.♗e2 ♗b7 5.0–0 d5 6.d4 ♗d6

The game develops at a slow pace, and even Blackburne, the creator of many fine

combinations, demonstrates a model of the new positional approach to the process of the fight.

7.♘c3 0–0 8.b3 ♘bd7 9.♗b2



9...♕e7

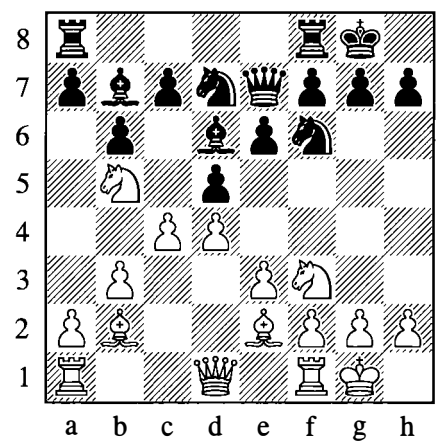
Blackburne consents to the exchange of his dark-squared bishop for the white queen's knight (after 10.♘b5). Whether this decision is right, is not so easy to say. The following arguments speak in its favour. White will have to lose two tempos to exchange off a piece of equal worth – for it cannot be maintained that Black's bishop on d6 is stronger than White's knight on c3. That is the first point. The second is that by playing ♘b5 White is surrendering an important central square – e4 – to Black's control. A further thought that should not be ignored is that with his ninth move Black is continuing the mobilization of his forces by connecting his rooks and bringing out his queen to a new post – its most convenient one – where it may support the push ...e5. Black is also setting up the positional threat of ...♗a3, which would lead to a certain weakening of White's queenside; but after ♘b5xd6 Black can recapture the knight with his c-pawn, acquiring the c-file for operations with his rooks.

Yet despite the undeniable weight of the above arguments, Blackburne's decision must be considered at least questionable. He would be right if White's manoeuvre ♘c3-b5xd6 were an isolated, self-contained operation. In reality, though, the exchange that Zukertort carries out is the initial link in a profound plan of attack, the execution of which will inflict a terrible combinative catastrophe on his opponent. White's plan consists in preparing a pawn offensive in the centre by means of ♘d2, f2-f3, ♕c2, ♖ae1, ♗d3 and finally e3-e4. With a black bishop on d6 and a pawn on c7, this complex plan would come up against an antidote in the form of ...c5.

If instead of 9...♕e7 Black had played 9...a6, White would have had to think about a different plan, involving a2-a3 and b3-b4.

In the event of an immediate 9...c5 he would have played 10.dxc5, opening up the diagonal of his queen's bishop and meeting 10...bxc5 by organizing pressure on the c5-pawn. In the tense conditions arising in that kind of game, it would be hard to speak of an advantage for either side, seeing that both opponents would have been conducting the opening competently enough, and in keeping with the new positional principles.

10.♘b5



10...♘e4

This knight sortie, from which Black essentially gains nothing, makes it easier for White to carry out the plan indicated above.

But then again, a push in the centre with 10...e5 at the present moment would lead, after 11.dxe5 ♘xe5 12. ♘xd6 cxd6, to advantage for White (outpost on d4; weakness of Black's centre pawns).

It isn't easy to give Black useful advice at this stage, seeing that manoeuvres with the rooks on the back rank also look fairly pointless; but perhaps after all he should unravel the central knot, by means of 10...c5. Then if 11.♘xd6 ♕xd6 12.♘e5, Black continues 12...cxd4 13.exd4 dxc4, giving his opponent hanging pawns.

11.♘xd6 cxd6 12.♘d2! ♘df6 13.f3 ♘xd2 14.♕xd2 dxc4

The only chance of undertaking something against the approaching threat of an offensive with e3-e4. If White recaptures on c4 with his bishop, the c-file is opened and Black acquires an outlet for the activity of his rooks; while in the case of 15.bxc4, the c4-pawn may become an object of attack.

15.♗xc4 d5

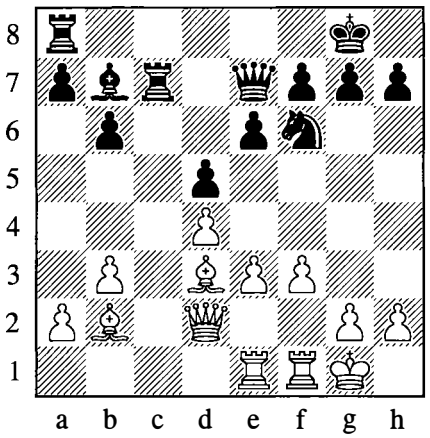
The fact that this move (supposedly!) restricts the activity of Black's bishop is of no importance. Black could of course play 15...♖fc8 first, whereupon the immediate 16.e4 would not be all that good on account of 16...d5. But White could play a preliminary 16.♗d3 or 16.♖ae1, and thus ensure the advance of his centre pawn. Black's task is to keep the point e4 under maximum control, and Blackburne's move fully meets this requirement.

16.♗d3 ♖fc8

Black is playing routinely without anticipating the strength of the impending hurricane – but how *is* he to set up a barrier?

The continuation 16...♕d6 17.♖ae1 ♘d7 18.e4 dxe4 19.fxe4 e5 20.♗c4 would keep the initiative in White's hands.

17.♖ae1 ♖c7



18.e4

The offensive has begun, but as we shall see from what follows, Blackburne has devised a sharp and seemingly very promising plan of defence.

18...♖ac8 19.e5 ♘e8 20.f4 g6

An immediate 20...f5 would not give a satisfactory defence either, on account of 21.exf6 ♘xf6 (21...♕xf6 22.f5) 22.♖e5! ♘e4 23.♕e1 (or ♕e2), threatening f4-f5.

21.♖e3

Inducing the reply that now follows. If Black doesn't play 21...f5 at once, that move will be made difficult after 22.♖fe1, and without it the defence is hard to conduct.

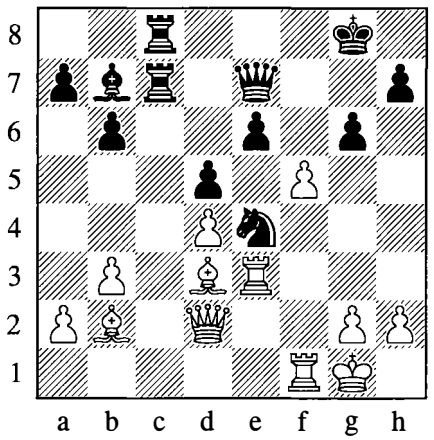
21...f5

White was threatening simply g2-g4.

22.exf6 ♘xf6

White would also maintain an attack after 22...♕xf6 23.♕e2 ♘g7 24.♖e5. Moreover that continuation would run counter to Blackburne's plan of defence with which he intends to refute Zukertort's attack outright.

23.f5 ♘e4



Blackburne has pinned all his hopes on this move, and not without reason. What indeed is White to do now? If he moves his queen, Black will simply reply 24...exf5 with a winning position, thanks to his mighty centralized knight and his extra pawn. But after 24.♗xe4 dxe4, with a threat to invade on c2 and win the white bishop, Black will acquire a pleasant initiative of his own.

Blackburne did not of course suspect that in this game he was destined to fall victim to one of the most brilliant combinations in the history of chess.

24.♗xe4!

Nevertheless!

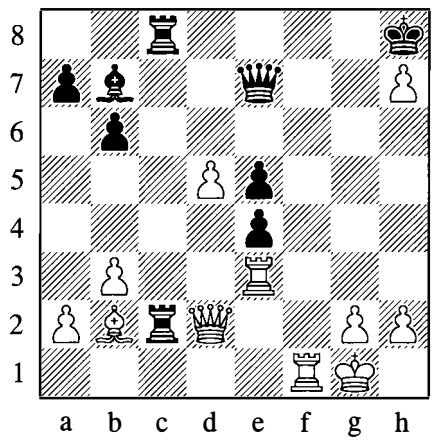
24...dxe4 25.fxg6!

How White intends to deal with 25...♖c2 is incomprehensible at first sight.

25...♖c2

Black, incidentally, has nothing else, seeing that 25...hxg6 would be met by 26.♖g3 ♕g7 (or 26...♕h7 27.♖f6 ♖g7 28.♖h3) 27.d5 e5 28.♕g5 ♖e8 29.♖f6.

26.gxh7† ♔h8 27.d5† e5



28.♕b4!!

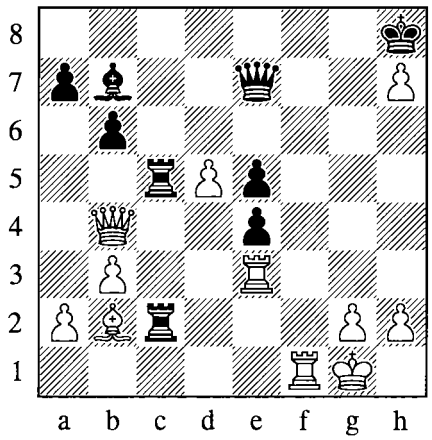
In this sudden queen sacrifice, grandiose in its conception and power, the whole of Zukertort's brilliant improvisation is revealed. The combination turns on the point e5. If that point were not defended by the black queen, White would force mate. Thus, on 28...♕xb4 there follows: 29.♗xe5† ♔xh7 30.♖h3† ♔g6 31.♖g3† ♔h7 (31...♔h6 32.♖f6† ♔h5 33.♖f5† ♔h6 34.♗f4† and ♖h5#) 32.♖f7† ♔h6 33.♗f4† ♔h5 34.♖h7#

28...♖8c5

The best move comparatively speaking, but it doesn't save Black.

On 28...♕e8, White has the decisive 29.♖f8† ♕xf8 30.♗xe5† ♔xh7 31.♕xe4† ♔h6 32.♖h3† ♔g5 33.♖g3†.

If instead 28...♖2c5, then 29.♕xe4, and Black cannot defend the e5-pawn.



29.♖f8†!

With this new sacrifice White conquers the critical e5-square.

29...♔xh7

Also after 29...♕xf8 30.♗xe5†, of course, the dénouement quickly ensues.

30.♕xe4† ♔g7 31.♗xe5† ♔xf8 32.♗g7† 1–0

Zukertort's combination can be characterized as a genuine masterpiece of chess art. Steinitz called it one of the greatest and perhaps the most beautiful of all combinations ever to have been created on the chessboard.

In 1889 the twenty-year-old Emanuel Lasker attracted attention within German chess circles. In July of that year, in the international amateur tournament at Breslau (where first place in the masters' event went to another German player, Siegbert Tarrasch), Lasker emerged as victor and gained the right to participate in international master tournaments.

A month later, Lasker was already exercising that right by taking part in a small tournament in Amsterdam, where the other contestants included several Englishmen and Dutchmen, and the Viennese master Bauer. In this contest Lasker took second prize (the first prize went to Burn). In his appraisal of this success, Steinitz wrote: "Mr Lasker made a fine début in the master tournament... There is no doubt that we shall hear more about the successes of this talented young player, who in this event created a masterpiece with a concluding attack on his opponent's king." Steinitz was referring to Lasker's game with Bauer, which acquired not only historical but also theoretical importance within the evolution of the chess combination.

Em. Lasker – J.H. Bauer

Bird's Opening
Amsterdam 1889

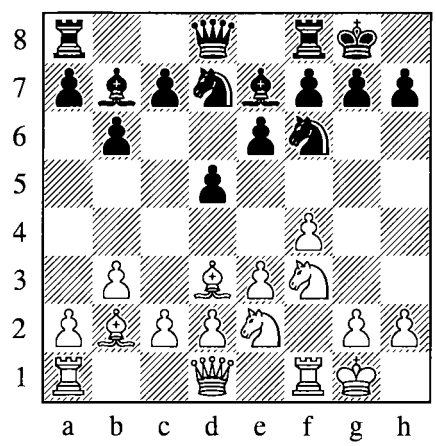
1.f4 d5 2.e3 ♘f6 3.b3 e6 4.♗b2 ♗e7 5.♗d3

Most annotators were negative about this move of Lasker's, reckoning that Black could later have exchanged off this bishop to his own benefit.

5...b6 6.♘c3 ♗b7 7.♘f3

We are reproducing the score of the game from Steinitz's magazine, from which we have quoted already. In some other publications (for instance Dufresne's book *Collected Instructive Games from Recent International Tournaments*) White's 6th and 7th moves are transposed.

7...♘bd7 8.0–0 0–0 9.♘e2



9...c5

Knowing the role played by White's bishop on d3 in the combination that shortly follows, the annotators maintain with one accord that Black should have exchanged this piece off by playing 9...♘c5 here. White would probably have continued 10.♘e5 ♘xd3 11.cxd3. Black is then a little constricted, but with 11...♘d7 he can probably equalize the chances.

10.♘g3 ♕c7 11.♘e5 ♘xe5 12.♗xe5 ♕c6 13.♕e2 a6?

This leads to loss of the game. Occupied with his own plan, Black ignores White's threat (♘h5). Astonishingly, not one of the annotators, not even Steinitz, gave attention to Bauer's error.

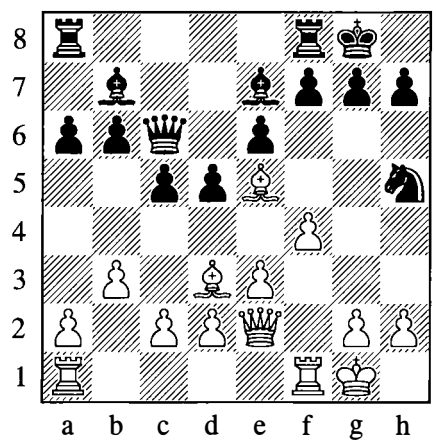
Black should play 13...♘e4. Then neither 14.♕g4 nor 14.♘h5 holds any terror for him, on account of 14...f6.

Black could also play 13...g6, but this would needlessly weaken his castled position.

14.♘h5! ♘xh5

14...♘e8 fails to 15.♗xg7.

The best Black can do is play 14...♖fd8, then after the exchange of minor pieces on f6, bring his king towards the centre, abandoning the h7-pawn. He would of course be worse, but he could still resist for a long time.



Here Black has only been reckoning on 15.♕xh5 f5, after which his position is perfectly sound.

15.♗xh7†!

"The start of a very deep and elegant combination" is what Steinitz calls this sacrifice.

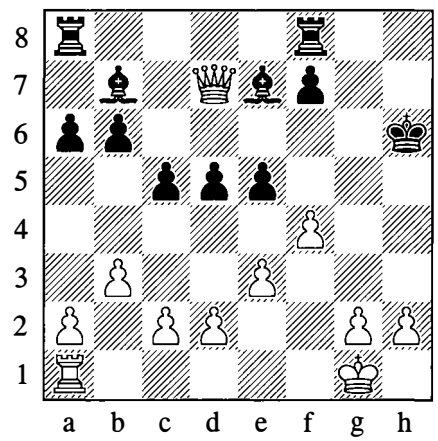
At that time Lasker's combination was completely original, for its distinctive feature is not the bishop sacrifice on h7, with which we have already acquainted ourselves, but the sacrifice of the second bishop for the g-pawn, which occurs a couple of moves later.

15...♔xh7 16.♕xh5† ♔g8 17.♗xg7!

This second sacrifice completely wrecks Black's castled position, after which his exposed king comes under a murderous attack from White's queen and rook.

Acceptance of the sacrifice is forced; on 17...f6, the simplest win is 18.♖f3 ♕e8 19.♕h8† ♔f7 20.♕h7.

17...♔xg7 18.♕g4† ♔h7 19.♖f3 e5 20.♖h3† ♕h6 21.♖xh6† ♔xh6 22.♕d7



The final thematic move of the combination. The queen delivers a double attack.

22...♗f6 23.♕xb7 ♔g7

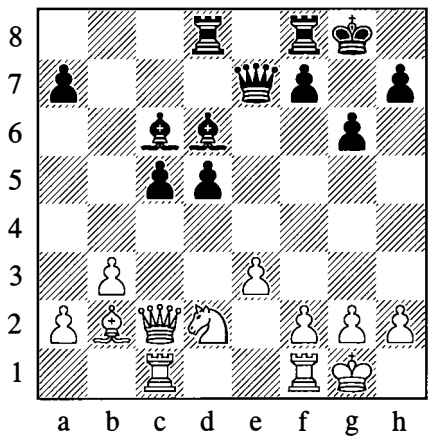
As the result of his combination, White has acquired a large material plus while maintaining the attack. Black could resign already. We will give the concluding moves:

24.♖f1 ♖ab8 25.♕d7 ♖fd8 26.♕g4† ♔f8 27.fxe5 ♗g7 28.e6 ♖b7 29.♕g6 f6 30.♖xf6† ♗xf6 31.♕xf6† ♔e8 32.♕h8† ♔e7 33.♕g7† ♔xe6 34.♕xb7 ♖d6 35.♕xa6 d4 36.exd4 cxd4 37.h4 d3 38.♕xd3
1–0

Nearly 25 years later, Lasker's combinative idea was repeated by Tarrasch with Black in the following position.

A. Nimzowitsch – S. Tarrasch

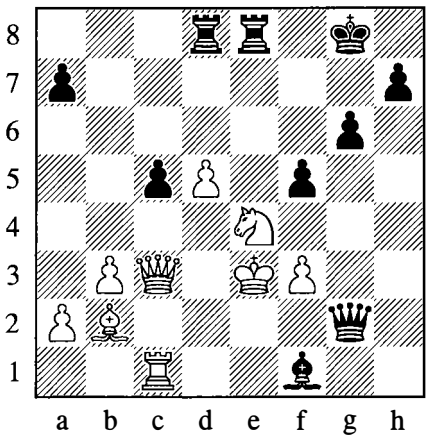
St Petersburg 1914



18...d4 19.exd4 ♗xh2† 20.♔xh2 ♕h4† 21.♔g1 ♗xg2 22.f3

After 22.♔xg2 ♕g4† 23.♔h2 ♖d5, White can save himself from the mate only by playing 24.♕xc5. However – just as in Lasker's combination – the attacker, having won the queen, goes on to pick up a minor piece through a double attack: 24...♖h5† 25.♕xh5 ♕xh5† 26.♔g2 ♕g5† and 27...♕xd2.

22...♖fe8! 23.♘e4 ♕h1† 24.♔f2 ♗xf1 25.d5 f5 26.♕c3 ♕g2† 27.♔e3



27...♖xe4†! 28.fxe4 f4† 29.♔xf4 ♖f8† 30.♔e5 ♕h2† 31.♔e6 ♖e8† 32.♔d7 ♗b5#

In its aesthetic aspect, Tarrasch's combination is even superior to Lasker's. The "pure" economical mate at the end; the sacrifice of the exchange in addition to that of both bishops; the fact that Black's king too was in an uncomfortable position – all this adds to the beauty of Tarrasch's play.

For this game, the venerable German champion was awarded the second special brilliancy prize. And yet this performance was indisputably more impressive than the Capablanca – Bernstein game that was honoured with *first* prize. The judges did not deny this; but they explained their decision by the fact that Tarrasch's combination was not original – it had a precedent. This formal, abstract approach was of course unjust. In this connection an anecdotal episode, of which the author was an eyewitness, comes to mind.

It was during the banquet at the conclusion of the tournament. Tarrasch, wine glass in hand, went up to Lasker and asked him, straight out, to say what he thought about the judges' decision.

"I won't presume to argue with the judges", Lasker replied. "Anyway, that isn't the point.

Whatever the judges decided, doctor, your combination against Nimzowitsch remains a masterpiece, just like the whole game, which you played brilliantly."

"Combinations like that", he added, "can happen only once in 25 years..."

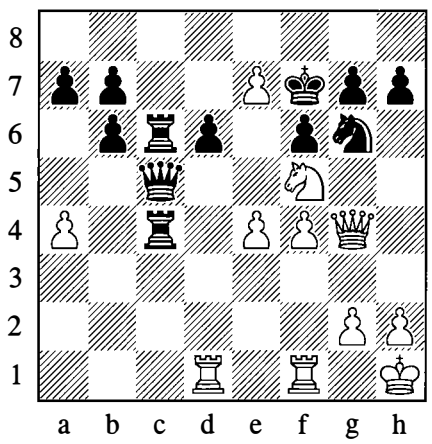
After Nimzowitsch – Tarrasch, the double bishop sacrifice occurred in some more games. Thus the combination on this pattern became a standard type, which was, so to speak, Lasker's theoretical discovery.

The diagonal action of the bishops in the direction of the castled position on the kingside, and the fact that the pawns on g2 and h2 (g7 and h7) are defended only by the king – these are the motifs with which this standard combination can easily be classified. And there is one further conclusion: the two bishops are strong not only by virtue of the harmony in their actions, but by their readiness to "sacrifice their lives".

We will now give two combinative masterpieces achieved by Chigorin at the New York international tournament of 1889. In that event Chigorin shared first and second places with the Austrian master Weiss and gained many outstanding victories in purely positional style.

M. Chigorin – W. Pollock

New York 1889



The most striking tactical factor is White's pawn on e7. On the theme of this pawn's advance to the eighth rank, the most varied combinations could arise. One of them might, for example, start with 32.♘xg7. On 32...♘xe7 or 32...♔xe7, White quickly concludes the fight with 33.♕e6†. A better option for Black is 32...♖xe4, but even then the straightforward 33.e8=♕† will obviously bring White the win.

Chigorin, however, preferred a different and more attractive way, attempting to combine two purposes of his thinking – the quest for victory, and for beauty. The combinative finish took six moves only:

32.e5 fxe5

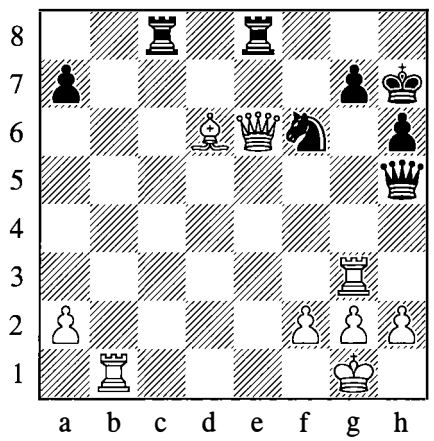
If 32...dxe5, then 33.♖d8.

33.♘xd6†! ♖xd6 34.fxe5† ♖f6 35.e8=♕† ♔xe8 36.♕d7† ♔f8 37.exf6

1–0

M. Chigorin – H. Bird

New York 1889



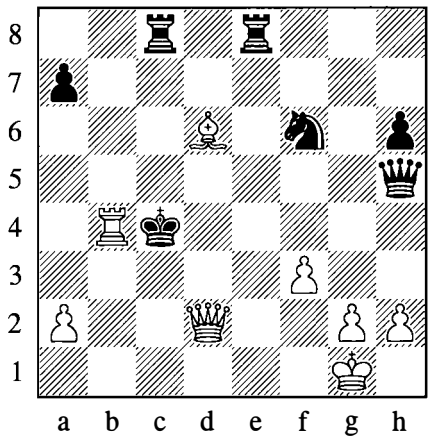
In a way this position calls to mind a desert. Chigorin devises a combination 12 moves long; his imagination forms a picture of the enemy king fleeing across the desert of the chessboard.

The continuation was:

34.♖xg7†! ♔xg7 35.♖b7† ♔g6 36.♕f7† ♔f5 37.♖b5† ♔e4

Black is even threatening mate!

38.f3† ♔e3 39.♕b3† ♔e2 40.♕b2† ♔d3 41.♕b1† ♔e2 42.♖b2† ♔e3 43.♕e1† ♔d4 44.♕d2† ♔c4 45.♖b4#



The following game received the first brilliancy prize at the famous Hastings congress of 1895. By virtue of its combinative idea it belongs among the peerless works of chess art. The combination in this game can be viewed as crowning the combinative art of the second half of the nineteenth century, and in some measure bringing it to its conclusion. It represents, so to speak, the pinnacle of that century's combinative thinking – both in the inspiration and brilliance of its form, and in the classic simplicity and clarity of its content.

W. Steinitz – C. von Bardeleben

Giuoco Piano
Hastings 1895

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♗b4† 7.♘c3

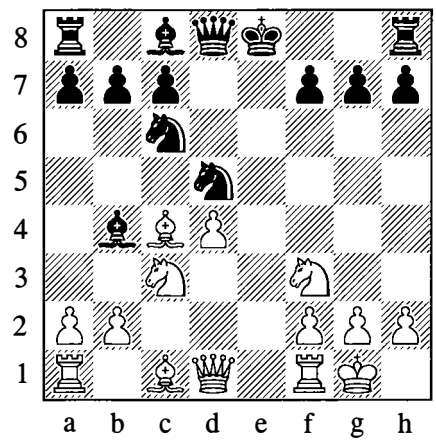
The sharpest reply, recommended by Steinitz in his chess manual.

A quieter continuation is 7.♗d2 ♗xd2† 8.♘bxd2. In that case White is not sacrificing a pawn, but on the other hand after 8...d5 he has to part with his pawn centre and consent to the isolation of his d4-pawn.

7...d5?!

Modern theory has deeply investigated 7...♘xe4; practice has yielded abundant material for evaluating the lines that spring from it. The arsenal of that time contained the variation 8.0–0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 (9.d5 is the Möller Attack) 9...d5 10.♗a3. This too is something Steinitz's manual recommends.

8.exd5 ♘xd5 9.0–0



Now Black has no good reply. Capturing twice on c3 leads to a loss, as demonstrated by theory. Black cannot ensure castling without damage.

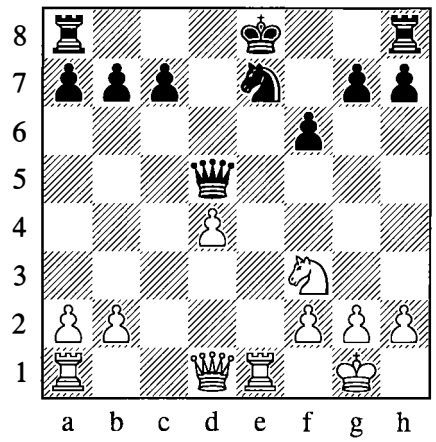
9...♗e6 10.♗g5 ♗e7

The relatively best line is 10...♕d7 11.♗xd5 ♗xd5 12.♖e1† ♔f8, though the misplaced black king grants White some advantage.

11.♗xd5 ♗xd5 12.♘xd5 ♕xd5 13.♗xe7 ♘xe7 14.♖e1

White's exchanging sequence has deprived Black of the possibility of castling, for good. An uncastled king is a motivating factor for combinations, and this is the very basis on which White's following attack is constructed.

14...f6



15.♕e2 ♕d7 16.♖ac1

In the whole of the game this is perhaps the only move of White's with which we cannot entirely agree. It cannot be denied that Steinitz's move is natural. It conforms to his own principles – the rook has emerged onto an open file. However, should Black play ...♔f7, ...♘d5 and ...♖he8, he might even wrest the initiative from his opponent.

A more reliable continuation of the attack was 16.d5, after which White's initiative would continue to develop; for example, 16...♔f7 17.♖ad1 ♖he8 (if 17...♘xd5, then 18.♘g5† fxg5 19.♕f3† ♔g8 20.♖xd5) 18.♕c4 ♔f8 19.♕b4, or 19.♖e6.

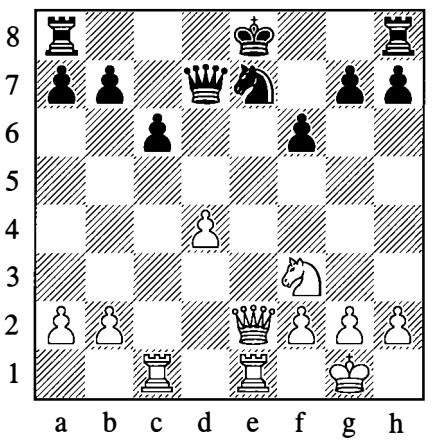
16...c6?

Black refrains from 16...♔f7. White has several tempting continuations, but nothing decisive:

a) Black probably feared the combination with 17.♕xe7†. However, after 17...♕xe7 18.♖xe7† ♔xe7 19.♖xc7† ♔d6 20.♖xg7 ♖ac8 21.g3 ♖c7 Black defends successfully.

b) 17.♘e5† fxe5 18.dxe5 looks dangerous, but 18...♕e6 enables Black to maintain the balance.

c) 17.♘g5† fxg5 18.♕f3† is another sharp possibility, though here too Black seems able to defend; for example 18...♔f8 19.♕xb7 ♕d5 20.♕xc7 ♘g6.



17.d5!

Aiming to penetrate with the knight via d4 to e6. The pawn sacrifice is entirely correct, and Black ought not to have accepted it.

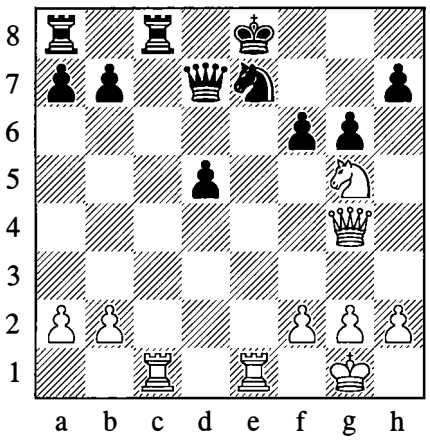
17...cxd5

An improvementwas 17...♔f7, and if 18.♘d4? then 18...♘xd5. However, White would keep the advantage by continuing 18.dxc6 bxc6 19.♕c4† ♕d5 20.♕xd5† cxd5 21.♖c7.

18.♘d4 ♔f7 19.♘e6 ♖hc8 20.♕g4 g6

Everything has gone according to Steinitz's wish, and with his next move he starts to reveal his brilliant combinative design. One thing that gives the whole combination a special complexion is that in the process of executing it, White has to take the weakness of his own back rank seriously into account – a circumstance of which Von Bardeleben makes excellent use.

21.♘g5† ♔e8



22.♖xe7†!! ♔f8!

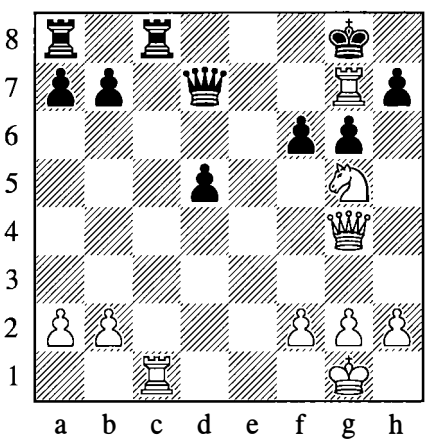
Black's splendid reply tells us that in this game Steinitz had come up against a worthy opponent. In view of the threat of mate on c1, the black queen is invulnerable – at the same time, all four of White's pieces are under attack.

Black could not capture the rook with 22...♔xe7, on account of 23.♖e1† ♔d6 24.♕b4† ♔c7 25.♖c1†, or 25.♘e6†, with a quick win.

23.♖f7†!

A move that exhibits the depth and precision of Steinitz's technique. If White first exchanged on c8, he would be unable to win the game.

23...♔g8 24.♖g7†!!



The apogee of beauty. Black clearly cannot take the undefended white rook with either his king or his queen. He has to withdraw into the corner. An uncommon spectacle!

24...♔h8 25.♖xh7†!

Von Bardeleben now departed from the tournament venue and did not return that day. In this way he denied Steinitz the chance to conduct his remarkable combination to its conclusion.

1–0

Steinitz, however, lost no time in demonstrating to the spectators how he had intended to finish the game. Namely: 25...♔g8 26.♖g7†! ♔h8 27.♕h4† ♔xg7 28.♕h7† ♔f8 29.♕h8† ♔e7 30.♕g7† ♔e8 31.♕g8†! ♔e7 32.♕f7† ♔d8 33.♕f8† ♕e8 34.♘f7† ♔d7 35.♕d6#

So Steinitz's calculations (when playing 22.♖xe7†) extended over thirteen moves!

In our opinion, the following game too should be counted among the combinative masterpieces of the nineteenth century. It represents a clash between two outstanding players of the 1890s.

H. Pillsbury – Em. Lasker

Queen's Gambit
St Petersburg 1895-6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 c5 5.♗g5 cxd4 6.♕xd4 ♘c6 7.♕h4

In a game between the same opponents nine years later (Cambridge Springs 1904), Pillsbury played more sharply with 7.♗xf6 gxf6, and only then 8.♕h4. White gradually succeeded in obtaining an attack. To avoid that possibility, Black can usefully play a preliminary 6...♗e7.

7...♗e7 8.0–0–0 ♕a5 9.e3 ♗d7 10.♔b1 h6 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♘d4 0–0 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6

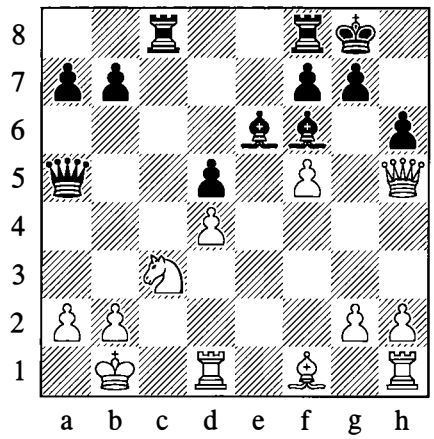
14.♕h5 ♘xd4 15.exd4 ♗e6 16.f4

This premature attack is beautifully refuted by the World Champion.

It was worth considering 16.♗c4, and if 16...g6 then 17.♕f3; though Black would still keep the initiative by replying 16...♕b4. On the other hand the tempting 16.♘e4 would fail to the unexpected combinative retort 16...♗xd4 17.♖xd4 ♕e1†, when Black emerges with an extra pawn.

16...♖ac8 17.f5

Aiming to answer 17...♗d7 with 18.♕f3, but Lasker has something else in mind.



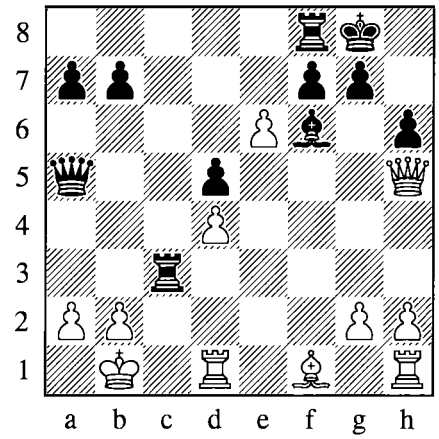
17...♖xc3!

Beautiful, unexpected, and at first sight not even wholly comprehensible.

18.fxe6

18.bxc3 can be met by the obvious 18...♕xc3 with the advantage, although 19.♕f3! enables White to exchange queens and escape into a difficult ending.

However, Black's most decisive line is 18...♖c8! with irresistible threats. A possible continuation is 19.fxe6 ♕xc3 and now 20.♕xf7† ♔h8 21.♗e2 ♕b4† 22.♔a1 ♖c1† with mate in two moves, or 20.exf7† ♔f8 21.♕e2 ♗xd4.



18...♖a3!!

Lasker produces a new revelation.

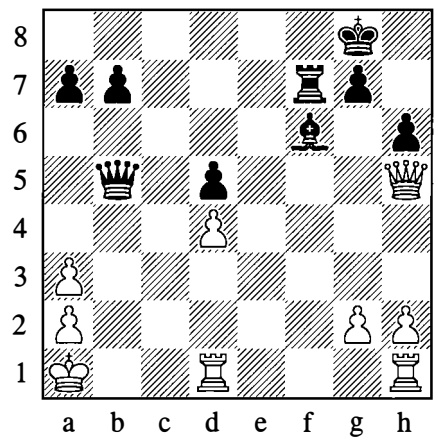
19.exf7†?

Even after the correct defence of 19.bxa3 ♕b6† 20.♗b5! ♕xb5† 21.♔a1 fxe6 Black is clearly better, though White keeps some saving chances.

19...♖xf7 20.bxa3 ♕b6† 21.♗b5

Anything else is wholly bad; this is White's best chance, but his situation remains grim.

21...♕xb5† 22.♔a1

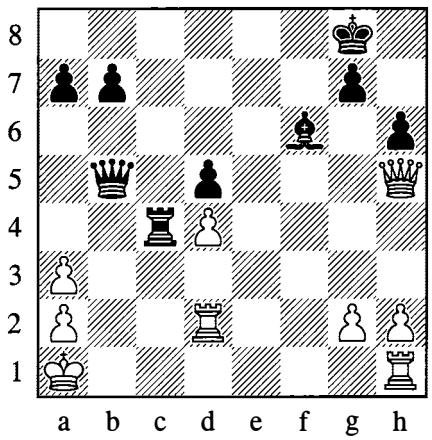


22...♖c7?

A "quiet" move with the threat of ...♖c1†, but White is able to parry this.

[Editor's note: Kasparov pointed out that there is a quick win with 22...♕c4, and if 23.♕g4 then 23...♖e7 with the decisive threats of ...♖e4 and ...♖e2. This is the reason why White ought not to have interpolated the exchange on f7.]

23.♖d2 ♖c4



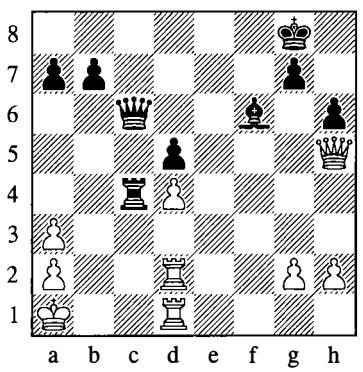
24.♖hd1

[Editor's note: Pillsbury missed a brilliant drawing idea here: 24.♖e1! ♕a5 25.♖e8† ♔h7 26.♕f5† g6 27.♖e7†!! ♗xe7 28.♕f7† ♔h8 29.♕e8† with perpetual check. – Kasparov]

24...♖c3?

This quiet, self-assured move could have given White unexpected chances.

The correct continuation of the attack was 24...♕c6!



25.♔b1 ♗g5, and White's position is not to be envied.

25.♕f5

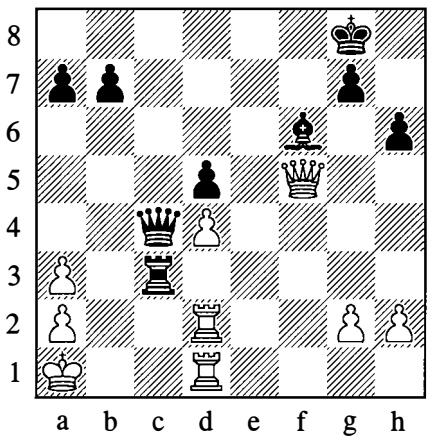
At this point 25.♖e1!, with the threat to exchange queens, would be somewhat unpleasant for Black.

On 25...♕c4? 26.♔b2!, Black has no satisfactory defence against 27.♖e8† and 28.♕f5†.

Instead Black would have to withdraw his rook with 25...♖c8, but then, if nothing else, White could play 26.♕f5 ♕c4 27.♕d3.

The move made by Pillsbury contains no direct threat, and that is its shortcoming.

25...♕c4



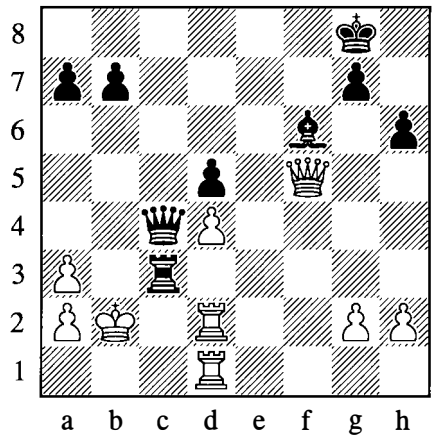
26.♔b2?

But this is really careless.

The correct move is 26.♔b1. White then threatens to force exchanges with ♖c2.

On 26...♖xa3 he has 27.♖c1! ♕b5† 28.♖b2, when Black not White is in a bad way. Intervening with the rook is also a forlorn prospect: 27...♖c3 28.♖xc3 ♕xc3 29.♕xd5†, and White has everything more or less in order.

Also after 26...♕b5† 27.♖b2 ♕c6 28.♖b3 White has every reason to play for a win.



Lasker's reply strikes like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

26...♖xa3! 27.♕e6† ♔h7?!

The correct procedure for escaping the checks is 27...♔h8! 28.♕e8† ♔h7 29.♔b1 ♗xd4! with a decisive attack.

28.♔xa3?!

[Editor's note: 28.♕f5† would give Black the chance to go wrong. After 28...♔h8 29.♔b1 White draws, since 29...♗xd4?? loses to 30.♕f8† and 31.♕xa3. Instead Black should go back with 28...♔g8 and then win as in the previous note.]

28...♕c3† 29.♔a4 b5†! 30.♔xb5 ♕c4†

And mate in two more moves.

0–1

With this vivid example we conclude our brief illustrated history of the evolution of combinative ideas in the second half of the nineteenth century. The chief conclusion from the examples we have given is that during that period, combination was gradually incorporated into positional planning and became an organic component part of it. Ways of building up the theory of combination were envisaged, foreshadowing the later historical stages of its development.

Chapter 16

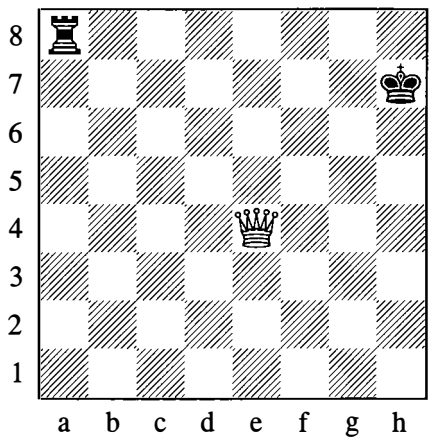
Double Attack – Attacks on Pieces by Pawns

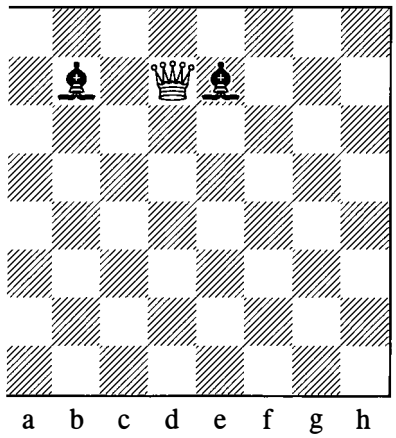
A double attack is the most frequently occurring case of simultaneous threats. This is a topic that demands independent, separate investigation.

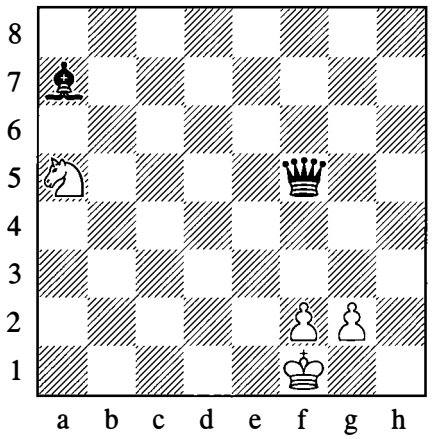
The theme of the double attack (mainly with a knight) was lightly touched on before, in Chapter 10, which we devoted to the elements of combination. There, however, we raised this topic merely in order to clarify the very definition of a "theme", in other words to explain to the reader how that element of combination is to be understood.

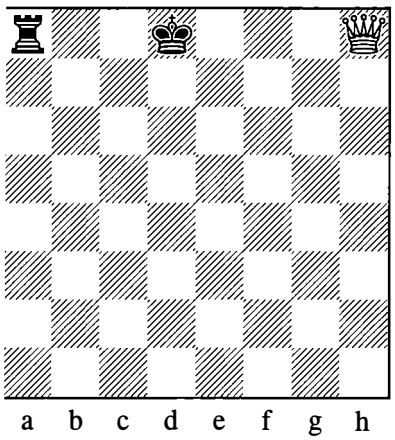
At present our task is different: it is to investigate the "double attack" theme in all the aspects that may be relevant to its application in combinative practice. An important observation must be made first of all. A double attack is not only a "combinative theme". It may also be carried out when no combination is involved. That is the first point. The second is that when we speak of attacking a piece in chess, we don't mean just any attack but one which demands an effort to parry it. In the Ruy Lopez, for example, we do not say that after 3.♗b5 the black knight is under attack. Or after 1.e4 e5 we could not call the move 2.♕g4? a double attack, even though the black pawns on g7 and d7 are in a position to be captured by the queen. An object of attack is always an undefended or inadequately defended point in the opponent's array of forces; and weak points, with the pieces (or pawns) located there, frequently supply the premises for a combination on the double attack theme.

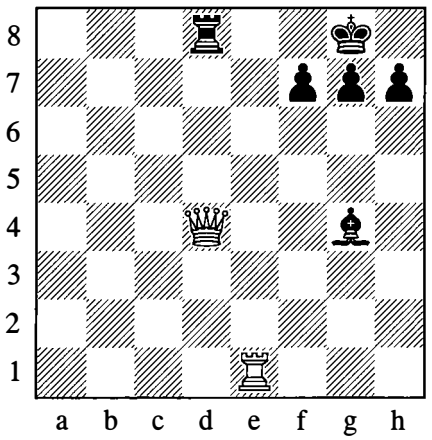
The most effective piece to implement this theme is of course the queen. Let us attempt a schematic representation of the double attacks with this piece. We will see from the diagrams below that they exist in five varieties. The queen sometimes delivers double attacks on its own, but more often it requires help from some other piece – as will be clear both from the schematic diagrams and from the examples that show this device executed in games.

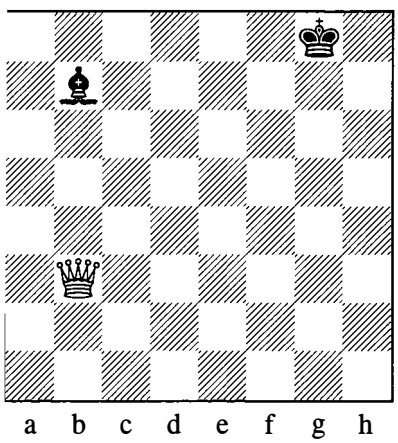


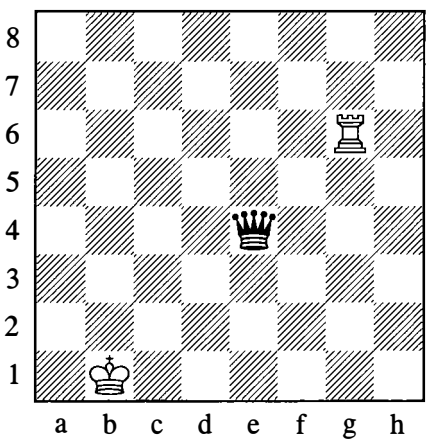


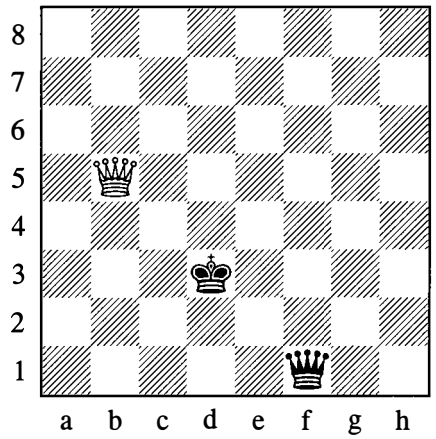










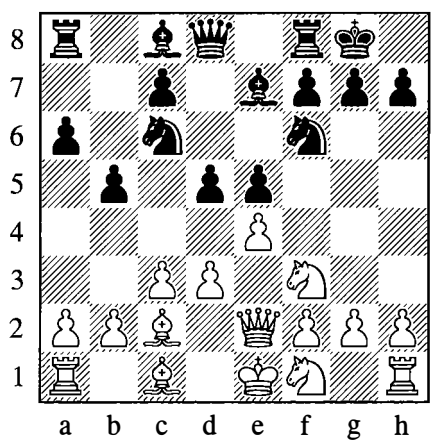


Three types of the queen's double attack are encountered most frequently in practice, namely: (1) double attack along two diagonals; (2) double attack along a file and a rank; (3) double attack along a diagonal and a file (or rank). Combinations on these themes are among those we shall examine.

J.R. Capablanca – A. Burn

Ruy Lopez
San Sebastian 1911

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 ♗e7 7.♘bd2 0–0 8.♘f1 b5 9.♗c2 d5 10.♕e2



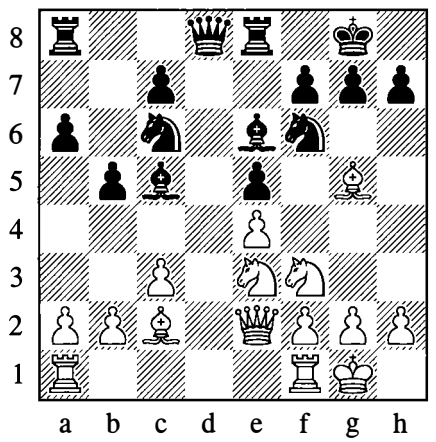
10...dxe4 11.dxe4 ♗c5

Black's last two moves are inferior and allow White to plan some interesting combinative lines.

12.♗g5

In the present circumstances, the pin on the black king's knight is a serious combinative factor.

12...♗e6 13.♘e3 ♖e8 14.0–0



14...♕e7

Black should have considered 14...♗xe3, seeing that the knight on e3 has already become very dangerous.

15.♘d5! ♗xd5 16.exd5 ♘b8 17.a4!

Here White could have executed a small combination on the double attack theme: 17.d6 ♗xd6 18.♗xf6 ♕xf6 19.♕e4 ♘d7 20.♕xh7† ♔f8, and Black's king position has been somewhat worsened.

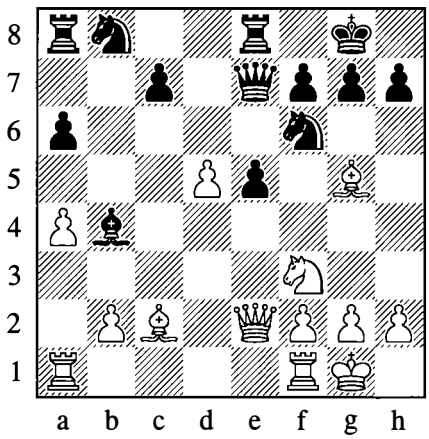
Capablanca finds a combination on the same theme but with a better result. The move he plays can be seen as the prelude to this combination. White is simply threatening to take the pawn on b5. There is nothing with which to defend it, so Black faces the choice between 17...bxa4 and 17...b4.

In the former case there follows 18.♗xa4

♖d8 19.♘xe5 with a large advantage for White; after 19...♖xd5 20.♖ae1 Black cannot avoid loss of material.

Burn chooses the second path, but the combination with a double attack is waiting for him there.

17...b4 18.cxb4 ♗xb4



19.♗xf6 ♕xf6 20.♕e4

A double attack against h7 and b4, made possible by the undefended state of the bishop on b4 and the fact that the h7-point is guarded only by the king. If Black had a pawn on a5, or if his knight were on f8 instead of b8, there could be no question of a double attack.

20...♗d6

Or 20...♕g6 21.♕xb4 ♕xc2 22.♖ac1, and Black loses the pawn on c7.

21.♕xh7† ♔f8 22.♘h4 ♕h6

If 22...g6, then 23. ♗xg6!.

23.♕xh6 gxh6 24.♘f5

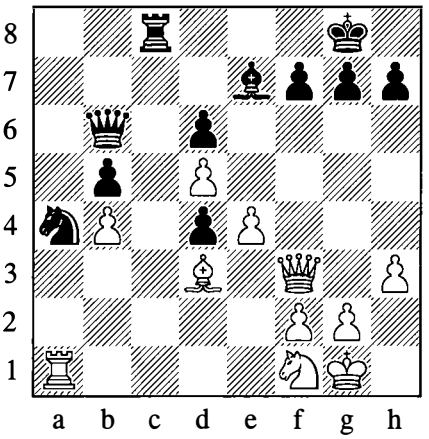
And White won.

...1–0

A whole series of combinations on the double attack theme was carried out by White in the following exhibition game.

J.R. Capablanca – F. Dus-Chotimirsky

St Petersburg 1913



It looks as though Black has everything under control, and that would indeed be the case if positional elements alone determined the character of the struggle. A combination intervenes, however, and all is transformed as if by the wave of a magic wand.

25.e5! g6

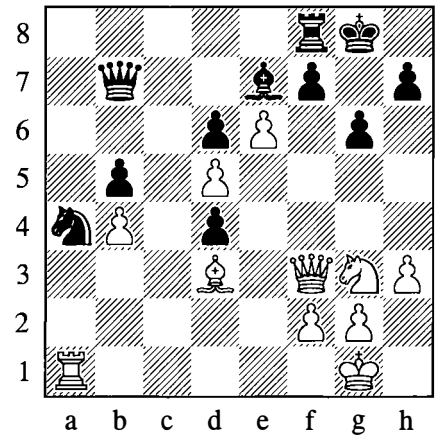
If Black had replied 25...dxe5, then with 26.♕f5 – hitting h7 and c8, and thus implementing the double attack theme – White would have concluded his assault victoriously. But after the defensive move played, Black's situation still remains dire, as White's attack does not subside; after one or two more moves, its "electric charge" of tactical potential starts building up again; its lightning begins to flash from all sides.

26.e6 ♖f8

If 26...fxe6 then 27.♕g4.

27.♘g3 ♕b7

At this point White would meet 27...fxe6 with 28.♕g4 e5 29.♗xg6.



28.♘f5!

This, in its way, is a double attack. White threatens both ♘h6† and exf7†.

28...fxe6

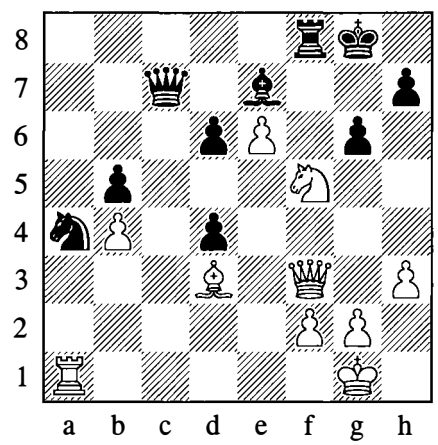
Of course 28...gxf5 is unplayable, as 29.♕xf5 forces mate.

29.dxe6

A new combination on the theme of a double attack. Now 29...♕xf3 loses a piece to 30.♘xe7†.

29...♕c7

Or 29...♕a7 30.♘h6† ♔g7 31.♘f7, with the threats of 32.♗xb5 and ♕f3-f4-h6†.



30.♕c6

Another combinative stroke, once again based on the knight performing a double attack: 30...♕xc6 31.♘xe7†

30...♕d8

Surrendering material and the game.

31.♘xe7† ♕xe7 32.♗xb5 ♘c3 33.♕d7 ♕xd7 34.♗xd7

Black now loses the exchange, but he still carried on the fight for a while, out of inertia.

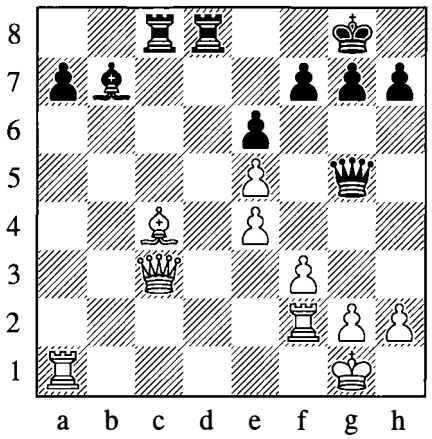
...1–0

Can we say that the combinations executed by Capablanca in this game were fortuitous in character, resulting from serious errors committed by his opponent? Of course not! These combinations fitted into his plan as an organic part of it, and constituted, so to speak, its concluding stage. What we *can* say is that, from the very opening, Capablanca's positional plan encountered insufficiently robust opposition, and that this made it easier for him to implement its final combinative stage successfully. In his book *Selected Games,* Vasily Smyslov aptly commented on the inevitable build-up of tactical tension during the process of a struggle: "Quite often, a correctly conducted game produces moments of climax when the solution can only be achieved by combinative means."

On the other hand, fortuitous combinations too have a place within the creative processes. This case arises when a combination prepared in advance is overlooked by the opponent and thus takes on the character of a skilfully camouflaged trap rather than the logical consequence of planned positional play. We would like to take a close look at one such case, which once again involves the theme of a double attack with the queen.

P. Dubinin – L. Savitsky

9th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1934



Black's position is the more active. The powerful placing of his rooks and queen, the pin of the c4-bishop, Black's outside passed pawn, the weakness of White's e5-pawn, control of the d-file – see how many positional arguments there are to convince us that the initiative in the unfolding struggle belongs to Black. Savitsky played an "attractive" move:

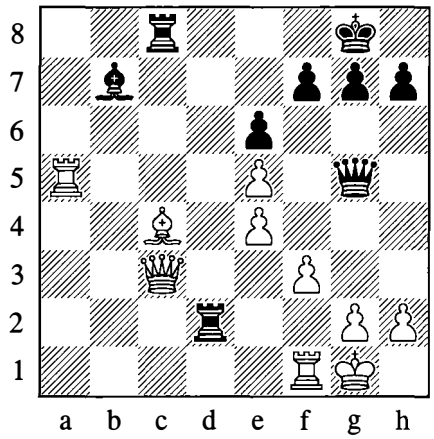
20...a5?

This bad move was to bring him an unexpected quick victory, whereas in truth it ought to have led to the total evaporation of Black's positional advantage. Black is giving up a pawn without obtaining anything in return. It turns out that Savitsky was playing for a trap, in the hope that his opponent would not notice the combination he had in mind. And so it was to be.

Playing for a trap is poor style, which usually rebounds on the player who goes in for it. Play which relies on a mistake from the opponent usually consists of bad moves, and justifies itself from the competitive viewpoint only when the opponent falls for the trap. From the creative viewpoint it is not justified at all, for the winner's bad moves do not become good ones just because his opponent blunders. Winning by bad play sounds like a paradox, and in all cases the bad play is creatively marred.

What, then, happened in the game? Here is what:

21.♖xa5 ♖d1† 22.♖f1 ♖d2



23.♖f2??

This is what Black had been counting on. What now follows is a combination on the theme of a double attack by the queen.

23...♖xf2 24.♔xf2 ♖xc4!

And White resigned in view of 25.♕xc4 ♕d2† and 26...♕xa5.

0–1

Instead of his fatal 23rd move, White should have played 23.g3. Then neither 23...♕h6 nor 23...♖cd8 gives Black a decisive attack. Furthermore Black has to reckon with the back-rank mate threats that arise for White on account of the black king's boxed-in position. Here is a sample variation indicated by Grigory Levenfish: 23.g3 ♕h6 24.h4 ♖cd8 25.♖b1! ♕g6? 26.♕xd2 ♖xd2 27.♖a8†, and mate in two more moves.

In place of the trappy idea of 20...a5, Savitsky ought to have pushed his *other* rook's pawn two squares forward. This would have given him good chances of winning the game.

After 20...h5, the a7-pawn is safe because of the combination 21.♖xa7 ♖xc4, followed by ...♖d1† and ...♕e3† (a double diagonal attack with the queen). White meanwhile is bound hand and foot until his bishop is unpinned; the pin serves as a highly potent combinative "motif". The only unpinning move is 21.♕b3 (21.♕c1 is met by the elegant combination 21...♕xc1† 22.♖xc1 ♖xc4! 23.♖xc4 ♖d1† 24.♖f1 ♖xf1† 25.♔xf1 ♗a6, the theme being the bishop's double attack along the diagonal), but then there can follow: 21...♕xe5 22.♖xa7 ♕c5 23.♖xb7 ♖d2 24.♕b6 ♕xc4! 25.♖xd2 ♕c1† 26.♔f2 ♕xd2† 27.♔g3 g5, and White obviously cannot repel the mating attack.

The variations are full of interesting schemes and combinations. All this could have followed from 20...h5. After 20...a5 Black's victory came more quickly, but the quality of the game was impoverished.

A fine victory with double attack themes was achieved by White in the following game.

A. Rubinstein – E. Znosko-Borovsky

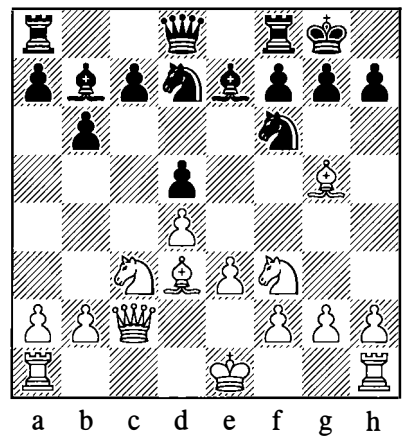
Queen's Gambit
St Petersburg 1909

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♘f3 0–0 7.♕c2 b6

The shortcomings of this method of developing the black queen's bishop in the Orthodox Defence had yet to be exposed plainly enough by theory at the time when the game was played. Among other things, a specific failing of Black's last move is that after 8.cxd5 he cannot retake on d5 with the knight without losing a pawn. In the event of 8.cxd5 exd5, the black bishop on b7 – for that is obviously where it will be developed – will prove to be rather passively placed. A notable point is that in the present game this bishop, being undefended on the b7-square, will even act as a target for a combination.

A more energetic response to White's 7.♕c2 is considered to be 7...c5. That is how Teichmann often handled this variation with good results.

8.cxd5! exd5 9.♗d3 ♗b7



10.0–0–0

This sharp variation, which Rubinstein introduced into practice, creates a state of tactical high tension; White is preparing an assault with h2-h4 and g2-g4.

10...♘e4 11.h4 f5 12.♔b1!

A subtle move; its aim is not only to remove the king from the file where Black may counterattack with ...c5 and ...♖c8, but also to prepare the ground for a combination.

12...c5?

Black's previous move already aroused doubts; the opening of the a2-g8 diagonal with his king on g8 introduced new combinative motifs, which were part of the reason for Rubinstein's 12.♔b1. The concrete significance of that move will be seen from the next note.

Black should have made the preparatory move 12...♖c8. If White continues 13.♗xe4 fxe4 14.♘e5, then Black obtains good play with 14...c5.

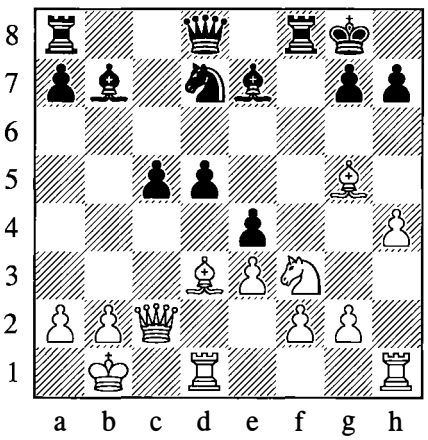
13.dxc5 bxc5

Not 13...♘dxc5, in view of 14.♘xd5 ♗xd5 15.♗c4; if White's king were on c1, this combination would be unplayable since the intermediate move 14...♘xd3 could be made with check. But also against 13...bxc5 Rubinstein has prepared a beautiful combination in which the double attack themes are implemented in turn, first by his bishop, then by his queen, and finally by his rook.

14.♘xe4!

The idea of Rubinstein's combination consists in utilizing the d-file and the a2-g8 diagonal to organize a series of double attacks. By sacrificing his bishop he opens up both these highways for his combinative assault.

14...fxe4



15.♗xe4!

A double attack by the bishop against d5 and h7.

15...dxe4

In this way, both roads are opened for Rubinstein's double attacks.

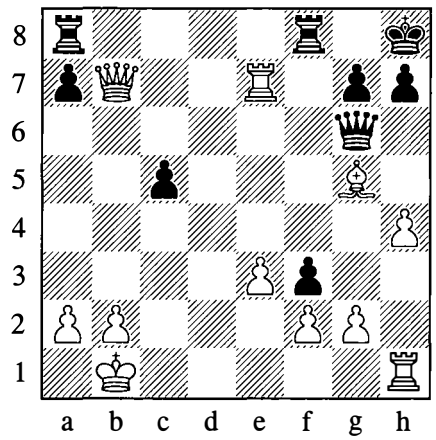
16.♕b3†

A double attack with the queen.

16...♔h8 17.♕xb7 exf3 18.♖xd7

A double attack by the rook against d8 and e7.

18...♕e8 19.♖xe7 ♕g6†



20.♔a1?!

This makes the winning process rather more difficult.

The right way is 20.♔c1 ♖ab8 21.♕d5. Then in the event of 21...♖bd8 22.♕e4, the rook on d8 will be under attack after the queen exchange. This would prevent Black from picking up two pawns while obtaining a passed pawn on g2, as he does in the game.

20...♖ab8 21.♕e4 ♕xe4 22.♖xe4 fxg2 23.♖g1 ♖xf2

As the result of his combination, calculated far in advance, White has an extra piece. Black's counterplay, based on his pawn penetrating to g2, will be liquidated by technical means. We reproduce the finale to complete the picture.

24.♖f4 ♖c2?

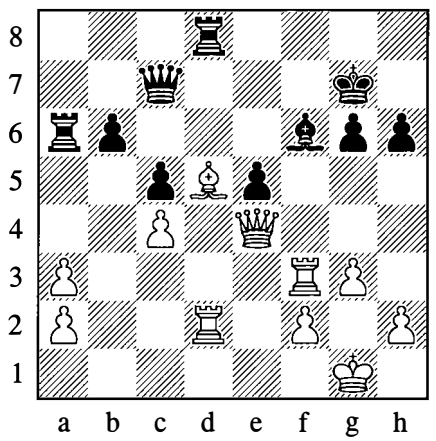
Black had to try 24...♖bxb2. White can then simplify the position with 25.♖f8†, and should still win, but the game would have been considerably prolonged.

25.b3 h6 26.♗e7 ♖e8 27.♔b1 ♖e2 28.♗xc5 ♖d8 29.♗d4 ♖c8 30.♖g4
1–0

The double attack theme looks very simple in its structure, and you might think that our contemporary players, possessing plenty of examples from the classics of the past, would already be able to formulate some theoretical generalizations and conclusions. However, this theme is so rich in creative content, and embraces such diverse combinative processes, that even the celebrated grandmasters of our time fall victim to combinations based on it. Here is one such case.

G. Stahlberg – M. Najdorf

Buenos Aires 1947



Black's position is clearly worse, thanks to the superb placing of White's bishop in the centre of the board. Under cover of this bishop, White can conduct his attack systematically and by a variety of means.

It would for instance be worth considering 31.♖dd3, with the threat of ♖xf6.

The idea of an attack with h2-h4-h5 is also very dangerous for Black; he appears to have no good defence against it. For example after 31.h4 h5 32.g4, the pawn barrier in front of the black king is wrecked.

Stahlberg's attention was drawn to one other tactical factor: the undefended state of the rook on a6, in conjunction with the weakness of the g6-point. Concentrating his creative thoughts around these "motifs", Stahlberg eventually found a combination that quickly gave him victory. Its initial move is beautiful:

31.♗f7!! ♔xf7

Black cannot take the rook: 31...♖xd2 32.♕xg6† ♔f8 33.♕g8† ♔e7 34.♕e8† ♔d6 35.♕e6#

32.♖xd8 ♕xd8 33.♕b7†

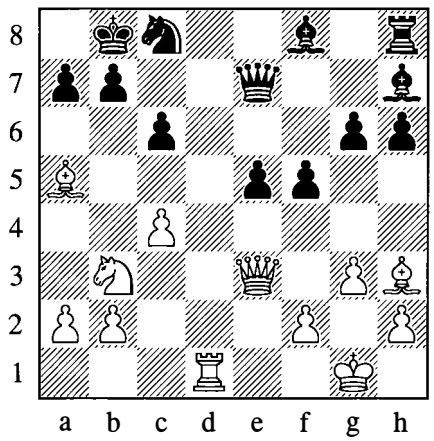
Here is the theme of the combination.

33...♔g8 34.♕xa6 e4 35.♖e3 ♗d4 36.♖xe4 1–0

In the following game White executed a fine combination involving double attacks.

V. Smyslov – M. Euwe

Candidates' Tournament, Zurich 1953



24.♗b4! ♕f6

Avoiding the double attack 24...♕xb4 25.♕xe5†.

25.♗c3

Again threatening a thematic strike with ♗xe5† or ♕xe5†.

25...♗g7 26.♘c5

Once more preparing a double attack, this time with the knight.

26...♔a8 27.♘xb7

27.♖d7 also leads to a quick win.

27...♔xb7 28.♖d7† ♔a8 29.♕c5

And White won, though only after a long struggle.

...1–0

Bronstein gives the following variation which would have crowned Smyslov's combination more fittingly: 29.♗g2 ♖e8 30.♗xe5 ♖xe5 31.♕xe5 ♕xe5 32.♗xc6† ♔b8 33.♖b7† ♔a8 34.♖b6#

We could give plenty more demonstrations of the queen's double attack. It would be useful for the reader himself to collect and examine some suitable examples. We are not giving any special examples of double attacks with a rook or bishop – they are no different from those with the queen. Double attacks with a rook are the same as the queen's attacks along the file and rank. Themes involving bishops are the themes of the queen's double attacks on the diagonals. We also see no need to return to the double attack with a knight. The nature of such an attack is clear – the Troitsky study given in Chapter 11 was alone sufficient to portray it so vividly and in such diverse forms that it is hardly worth adding anything further.

Let us sum up our thoughts on the subject of the double attack (principally with the queen).

In the majority of cases where the double attack theme is implemented, one of the objects of attack is a weakened point in the opponent's castled position. We may list the following devices which have combined with that of the double attack in the execution of a combinative idea:

1) The device of drawing an enemy onto a square (a piece is drawn to square where it is undefended; the king is drawn into the line of a potential check).
2) The diversion device (the reverse of "1": a piece is diverted from defending a square or line that is intended to be one of the objects of the double attack).
3) Destruction or removal of an obstacle (elimination of enemy pieces and pawns for the purposes of exposing the king, opening lines, creating weak points).

There exist other combinative devices such as that of "interference" with a line of defence (when a point that is under attack is deprived of protection through blockage of the line of action of the piece that was guarding it; an example is Anderssen's e4-e5 in the "Immortal Game"). A special place is occupied by the device of pinning a piece – among others that we shall touch on in due course. At the moment, we wish to illuminate the combinative role of the weakest of the chess units, the pawn. There are combinations in which it falls to the pawn's lot to fill the role of hero. But then even in a secondary role, the pawn is often of great significance. Some of the most complicated combinations could not have taken place if a pawn that was participating at some stage had been located just one square away from the very place where it fulfilled its secondary role.

We shall shortly have the chance to satisfy ourselves that a pawn can indeed become the hero of a combination. A combination can be based on a pawn; a pawn can give birth to it. In other words, we must acknowledge that the activation of a pawn gives rise to distinctive combinative motifs.

To possess a far advanced passed pawn is virtually to stand on the threshold of a combination. In chess terminology, a double attack with a pawn has been given the

picturesque name of a "pawn fork". We often come across such a device in the very opening of the game. In the middlegame, a pawn fork figures now and then as a combinative theme.

The use of the fork, both as a tactical device and as the theme of a combination, is well illustrated in the first part of the following game.

D. Janowski – Em. Lasker

Four Knights Game
Cambridge Springs 1904

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗c5

The illustrious Morphy liked to play this way.

5.♘xe5

Here is a small combination already, on the theme of the fork.

5...♘xe5

Lasker comes to meet his opponent and allows him to implement the fork theme.

Contemporary opening analysis also examines 5...♘d4 here.

6.d4

White regains the piece, and at the same time he has somewhat the better development.

6...♗d6 7.f4 ♘g6

According to the opening manuals, 7...♘c6 is best.

8.e5

Another fork. True, in the present circumstances it does not constitute a combinative theme.

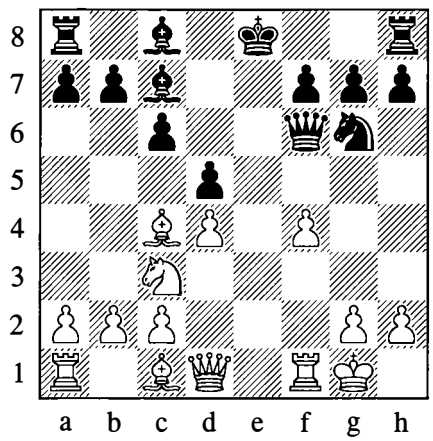
8...c6

A dubious attempt to confuse the issue. Janowski considers castling to be obligatory here, but 8...♗e7 is also possible.

9.♗c4

Black's position becomes critical after 9.exd6 cxb5 10.♕e2† ♔f8 11.f5 ♘h4 12.0–0 and now 12...b6 13.♗g5, or 12...♕b6? 13.♕e7† ♔g8 14.♘d5.

9...♗c7 10.exf6 ♕xf6 11.0–0 d5



12.♗xd5!

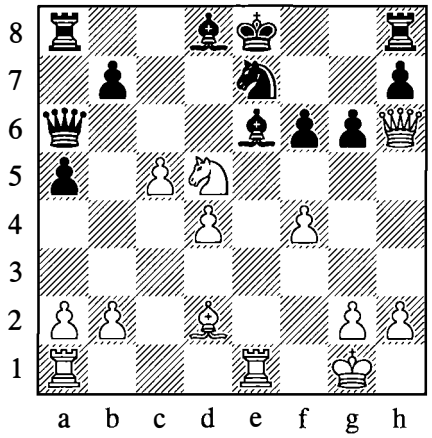
Otherwise Black will simply obtain the better game,

12...cxd5 13.♘xd5 ♕d6 14.♕e2† ♘e7 15.♖e1 ♗d8 16.c4 f6 17.♗d2 a5 18.♕h5† g6 19.c5 ♕a6?

Black should not remove the pressure from the d5-point.

The correct line is 19...♕c6 20.♘xe7 ♗xe7 21.♕h6 (21.♕e2 ♕d7) 21...♗e6 with unclear play, for example: 22.♕g7 ♔d7 23.d5! ♕xd5 24.♗b4! axb4 25.♖ad1 ♖he8

20.♕h6 ♗e6



21.♘xf6†?

This obvious-looking continuation is not best.

Chigorin suggested that 21.♘b6 ♘f5! 22.♖xe6† ♔f7 23.♕h3 ♔xe6 24.♕b3† ♔e7 25.♖e1† ♔f8 26.♘xa8 ♕xa8 27.♕e6! would lead to a win, but Black retains a defensible position with 27...h5.

Janowski indicates 21.♕g7 as the winning move, the idea being that after 21...♗xd5 22.♕xh8† ♔d7 23.♕xh7 White has a material advantage – rook and three pawns for bishop and knight – as well as a continuing attack. This verdict requires careful examination, as it leaves out of account the powerful, aggressive position of Black's centralized bishop. By continuing 23...♕c6, Black immediately obtains chances of a counterattack.

The strongest option looks to be 21.♘xe7 ♗xe7 22.d5! ♗xd5 23.♖xe7†! ♔xe7 24.♕g7† ♗f7 25.♖e1† ♔d7 26.♕xf7† ♔c8 27.♗c3, and White has a clear advantage.

21...♔f7 22.♘e4 ♘f5!

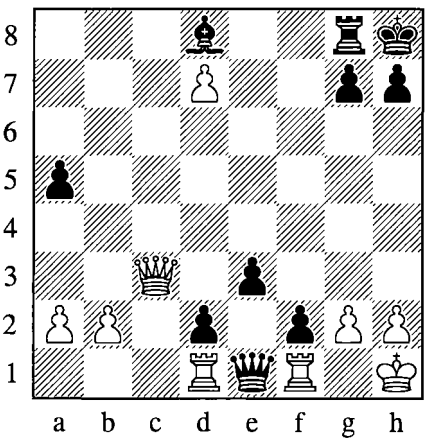
Black now obtains a counterattack. The position is fairly balanced, but Janowski later went astray and lost.

...0–1

In this example, the combinative role of the pawn – a thematic fork in the opening – was relatively insignificant. However, if you recall one classic game from the match between two leading masters of their time, Labourdonnais (France) and McDonnell (Ireland), you cannot help being filled with immense and respectful faith in the active combinative work of pawns. Labourdonnais managed to get three of his pawns advanced as far as the seventh rank. Here is the combination that concluded the game.

A. McDonnell – L. Labourdonnais

London (16) 1834



36...♕xd1!

This is most precise, though 36...♕xf1† 37.♖xf1 e2 38.♕d3 e1=♕ would also win.

37.♖xd1 e2

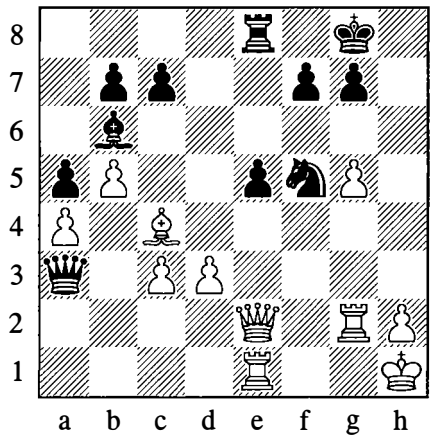
The three pawns prove much stronger than the queen and rook, and White cannot escape a quick mate.

0–1

A pawn's impetuous march to its queening square has figured in many games as the theme of some very beautiful combinations. Let us look at a number of examples.

K. Sterk – F. Marshall

Bad Pistyan 1912



White is the exchange up, for which Black lacks compensation. For good measure, the positional advantage is on White's side. His bishop is occupying a menacing position on c4, and the points f7, g7 and h7 are truly weak – particularly f7, which is already subject to attack.

The most energetic way for White to exploit his material and positional plus lies in the resolute advance of his g5-pawn. Taking the support of the bishop into account, this pawn embodies all the elements of a combination – motif, idea, theme. The possibility of a harmonious attack on f7 by the bishop and pawn constitutes the basic leitmotif of the combination White executes.

27.g6! ♖e7 28.♕h5 ♘h6 29.♕h6!

A sacrifice with two thematic mates in mind. One of them is a mate with a rook supported by a bishop and... a knight that does not yet exist!

29...gxh6 30.gxf7† ♔h7 31.f8=♘†

White could also promote to a queen, which would increase the length of the solution by just one move; however, he was evidently concerned not only with the brevity of the solution but also with its elegance.

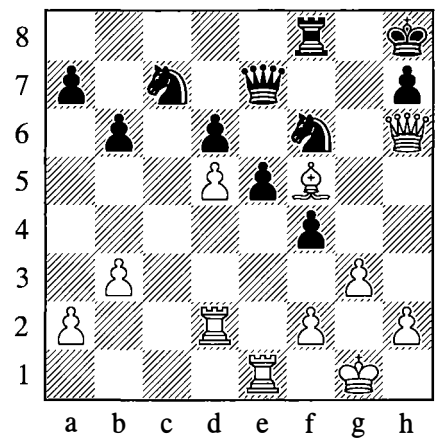
31...♔h8 32.♖g8#

Even though the final mating pattern dispenses, so to speak, with the direct participation of the pawn, it would be rank ingratitude to forget the pawn's heroic run. Conceptually if not technically, the piece on f8 is not simply a knight but a pawn reincarnated as one.

In the following example we shall see how the firmly blocked pawn on d5 was unexpectedly given the "go-ahead" and quickly brought White the decision he desired.

M. Botvinnik – N. Grigoriev

Leningrad – Moscow match 1927



The initial move of the combination is unexpected and pretty.

28.♖xe5!

Black now faces a forlorn choice – either to play 28...♕xe5 and abandon his own rook to its fate, or to fall in with White's combinative scheme by giving the green light to the d5-pawn. Black opts for the latter.

28...dxe5 29.d6

Here it is – the theme of the double attack that is familiar to us.

29...♕d8 30.dxc7

30.♕xf8† ♕xf8 31.dxc7 was another way to finish the game.

30...♕xd2 31.♕xf8† ♘g8 32.c8=♕ 1–0

In the following game it was in the very opening – at an early stage of it, even – that White managed to demonstrate a charming idea featuring the potential queening of a pawn by means of a sudden combination.

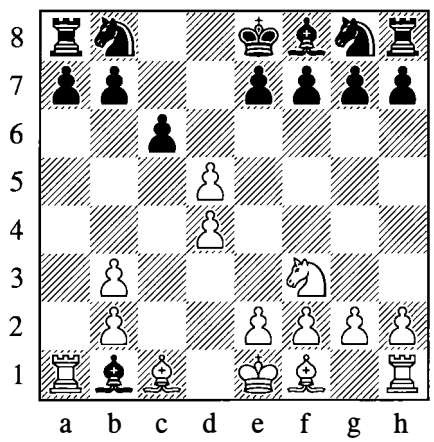
C. Schlechter – J. Perlis

Queen's Gambit, Slav Defence
Carlsbad 1911

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♗f5 3.c4 c6 4.♕b3 ♕b6 5.cxd5 ♕xb3 6.axb3 ♗xb1

Black considered that he was forced to play this.

True enough, the continuation 6...cxd5 7.♘c3 e6 8.♘b5 ♘a6 9.♖xa6 bxa6 10.♘c7† ♔d7 11.♘xa8 ♗d6 12.e3 ♘e7 13.♗xa6 ♖xa8 leaves White with an extra pawn, but exploiting it will be far from simple.



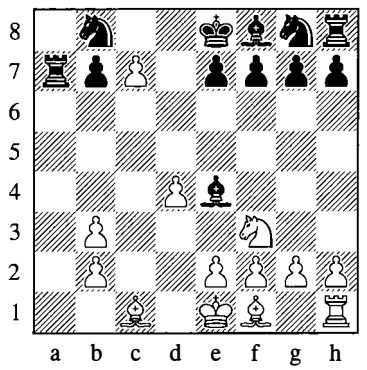
Now a most astute combination ensues, in which a pawn will display all its best qualities.

7.dxc6!!

A conception of rare originality and beauty.

7...♘xc6

On 7...♗e4, there would follow 8.♖xa7!! ♖xa7 9.c7 – this position, which we have diagrammed, represents the theme of Schlechter's combination.



The action of the pawn on c7 may be said to constitute a double attack, of which one component – the threat to capture on b8 – is an attack in the literal sense of the word. The other component, the threat of c8=♕, although not literally an attack on a piece, is nonetheless a mate threat or an attack against a square. We can see, then, that double attacks with a pawn are of two kinds: one is a fork, the other is the simultaneous threat to capture a piece and to move the pawn straight forward to the end square of its file. We are digressing from the Schlechter – Perlis game, but we only need to give one more move from it.

8.♖xb1

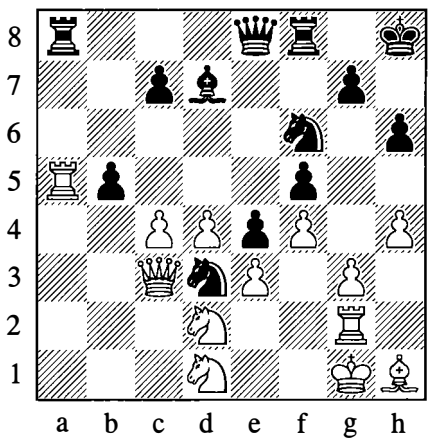
Black is simply left a pawn down and with the worse position; naturally he went on to lose the game.

...1–0

An astounding combination, culminating in thematic pawn attacks, but much more complex than any of our previous examples, was carried out in the following game.

E. Bogoljubow – A. Alekhine

Hastings 1922



29...b4!

The start of a combination calculated a long way ahead. Its theme is the same as in Schlechter – Perlis. Its prerequisites are the undefended state of the first rank and the unguarded knight that is located there, on d1.

30.♖xa8

30.♕a1 would be bad on account of 30...♖xa5 31.♕xa5 ♕a8! 32.♕xa8 ♖xa8 33.♘f1 ♖a1 34.♖d2 ♗a4, or 34.♘b2 ♘g4, winning quickly.

30...bxc3!

Three moves ago, this pawn was still on b7. It follows from this that the six-square path of a pawn, which appears so long and so hard to travel, takes on a totally different aspect when stimulated by the attractive light of a combinative beacon.

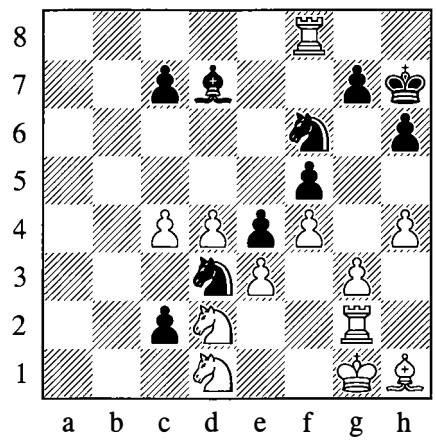
The simple 30...♕xa8 31.♕b3 ♕a1 would also have led to a quick win.

31.♖xe8 c2!!

And here before us is the concluding theme of the combination, which once again is a double attack by a pawn – against d1 and c1. The combination has consisted of three pawn moves.

32.♖xf8† ♔h7

White has two extra rooks, but the strength of the double attack is so great that the hopelessness of his position will soon become clear.



33.♘f2 c1=♕†

Mission accomplished! The pawn from b7 has become a queen on c1. We might draw the curtain here, but the point is that after fifteen more moves we shall be witnessing yet another pawn combination.

34.♘f1

The situation of White's pieces on the kingside is tragicomic.

34...♘e1 35.♖h2 ♕xc4

Now the threat of ...♗b5 arises, and White cannot avert it without losing material.

36.♖b8 ♗b5 37.♖xb5 ♕xb5

Black has a queen for rook and bishop – quite a serious material plus. The white

pieces are bunched together in a corner of the board. The exploitation of such an advantage usually proceeds according to a concrete but purely technical plan. However, the presence of combinative motifs in the position – in particular, the morass of weaknesses in which the white king finds itself – leads us to expect some new combinative fireworks in this spectacular game.

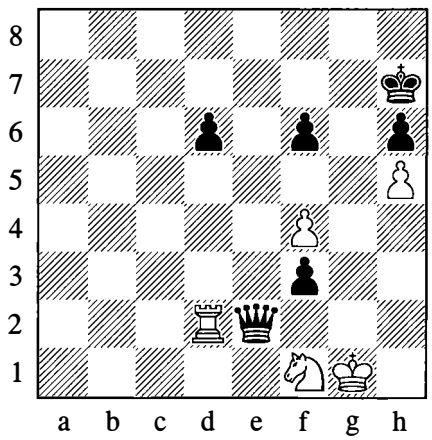
38.g4 ♘f3† 39.♗xf3 exf3 40.gxf5 ♕e2 41.d5

If 41.♘g4, then 41...♘xg4 42.♖xe2 fxe2, and the pawn's double attack crowns the affair.

41...♔g8 42.h5 ♔h7

Zugzwang!

43.e4 ♘xe4 44.♘xe4 ♕xe4 45.d6 cxd6 46.f6 gxf6 47.♖d2 ♕e2!



Now after 48.f5 ♔g7 White would again be in zugzwang.

48.♖xe2 fxe2

And now the pawn arriving from e7 has its say. A double attack once again, then.

49.♔f2 exf1=♕† 50.♔xf1 ♔g7 51.♔f2 ♔f7 52.♔e3 ♔e6 53.♔e4 d5†

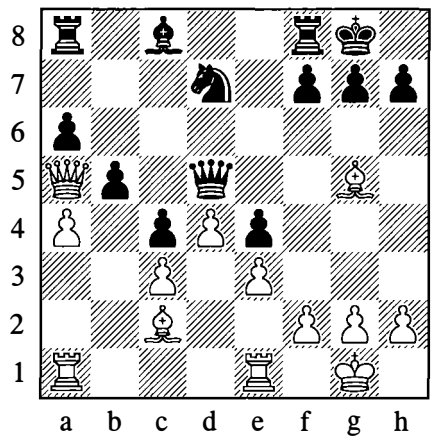
And White at last capitulated.

0–1

In the following game White's decisive combination culminated in the march of his a-pawn to a7. Grandmaster Tartakower called this game the pearl of the tournament.

J.R. Capablanca – R. Spielmann

New York 1927



The positional advantage is on White's side; his pieces are better developed, his pawn chain is stronger and more compact, and in the centre he has a powerful passed pawn. Black's queenside pawns are already under attack. White's 17th move was a2-a4, to which Spielmann has replied with 17...♕c6-d5, attacking the white bishop on g5. White has the initiative, and the simple retreat of his bishop to f4 would compel Black to undertake a difficult defence. Capablanca's next move shows just how dangerous his initiative is.

18.axb5!!

The bishop is offered up as a sacrifice – that same powerful bishop that White might have found so necessary to dominate the weakened dark squares in his opponent's camp. Some similar positional considerations are ignored as the combination proceeds.

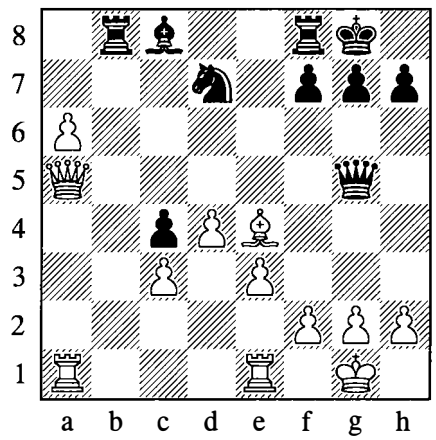
18...♕xg5

Alas, the gift has to be accepted. On 18...♗b7, White simply plays 19.bxa6.

19.♗xe4 ♖b8

In another variation, the pawn's role in the combination stands out even more vividly and no doubt more beautifully. It goes: 19...♖a7 20.b6 ♕xa5 21.bxa6!! ♗b7 22.♖xa5 ♗xe4 23.♖xa6 and wins.

20.bxa6!



20...♖b5

Or 20...♕xa5 21.♖xa5 ♘b6 22.a7 ♖a8 23.♖b1.

21.♕c7 ♘b6

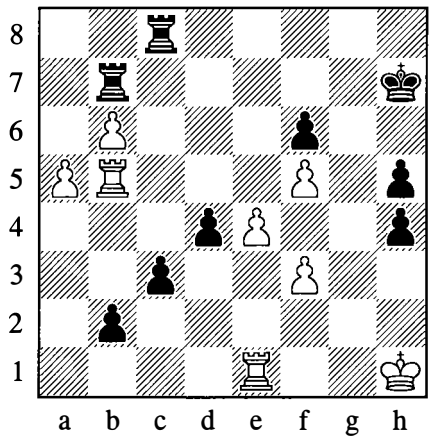
Nor is there any solace in 21...♕d8 22.♕xd8 ♖xd8 23.a7, after which Black has to give up his knight for the "terrible" pawn.

22.a7 ♗h3 23.♖eb1 ♖xb1† 24.♖xb1 f5 25.♗f3 f4 26.exf4
1–0

Labourdonnais' aggression with his pawns is called to mind by the concluding part of this next game.

V. Smyslov – M. Botvinnik

Absolute Championship of the USSR
Leningrad/Moscow 1941



White has two connected passed pawns, straining to reach the prized eighth rank – yet Black has not just two but three such pawns, one of which, on b2, is already on the very point of triumphing by attaining its promotion square.

56.a6

Of course; otherwise, Black plays 56...c2. That move would now be bad, if only because of 57.♖xb2 c1=♕† 58.♖xc1 ♖xc1† 59.♔h2, and there is nothing left for Black to do but give the rook back with 59...♖xb6. Instead, he answers White's move combinatively – with a rook sacrifice.

56...♖xb6! 57.♖xb6 d3! 58.♖g1 d2! 59.♖xf6 ♖c7!

But not 59...c2 60.♖f7† ♔h8 61.♖f6, with a draw.

60.♖fg6

So as to meet 60...c2 with 61.♖6g5.

60...d1=♕!

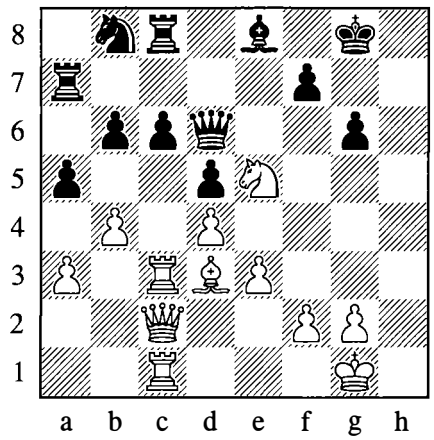
If now 61.♖xd1, then 61...c2.

0–1

Now, a few more examples.

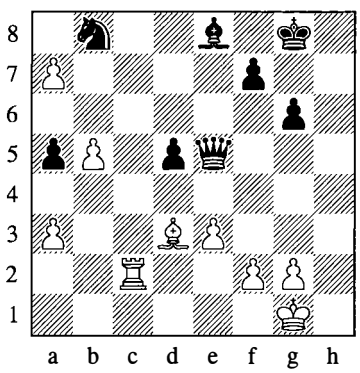
A. Kotov - V. Ragozin

17th USSR Championship, Moscow 1949



27.b5!

"The start of the most beautiful combination I have ever succeeded in creating on the chessboard," Kotov says of this move. He then demonstrates the main branch of the combinative idea that he had in mind. It goes like this: 27...c5 28.dxc5! ♕xe5 29.cxb6 ♖xc3 30.bxa7 ♖xc2 31.♖xc2 "An uncommon position," the author of the combination writes in conclusion. "Having travelled the route d4-c5-b6-a7, the white pawn inevitably queens – the three black pieces are unable to stop it."



In this variation, the theme of the pawn's double attack finds vivid expression. The point b8 is admittedly defended, but a8 is inaccessible to Black.

If now 31...♕a1†, White simply plays 32.♗f1.

So the theme is illustrated by a variation in a note to the game. With this we could conclude our examination of the example, but Kotov's disappointment at the way the game went, and the comment he made in this connection, prompt us to offer a brief reply. Instead of the natural 27...c5 which White had been looking forward to, Ragozin played:

27...♖c7
...1–0

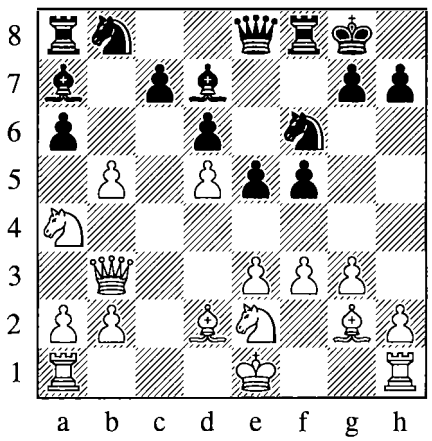
Kotov writes: "In our time, your opponents don't give you the chance to carry out your fine combinations – they simply prefer to remain a pawn down."

Thus Grandmaster Kotov, the author of many extremely fine combinations which his opponents could not avoid, contradicts himself by seeking to generalize about Ragozin's decision and to justify it by the tendencies of "our time". Obviously he is referring to the standard of defence which "in our time" has been raised, and to the refinement of chess technique and so forth. And yet the point is that combination forms an organic constituent part of the overall creative process in chess – indeed one of the most vital parts, indissolubly bound up with that process. You can avert a combinative threat that has arisen fortuitously or a tactical trap. But averting every combination – expunging it from the creative process – this is about the same thing as taking the soul out of human life and activity. And however much the technique of defence and prophylaxis may continue to improve, either in our time or in times to come, combination will live and develop as long as the art of chess itself lives and develops.

The World Championship match between Botvinnik and Bronstein gave us many interesting games. In particular, the ninth game of the match affords excellent material for studying the process of pawn combinations.

M. Botvinnik – D. Bronstein

World Championship (9), Moscow 1951



The white pawn that has forced its way as far as b5 becomes the hero of the combination.

15.b6! ♗xa4

It would have been better to take on b6, settling for a position a pawn down.

16.b7

There is no double attack, but a single one is sufficient to emerge with an extra rook.

16...♗xb3 17.bxa8=♕ ♗b6 18.axb3

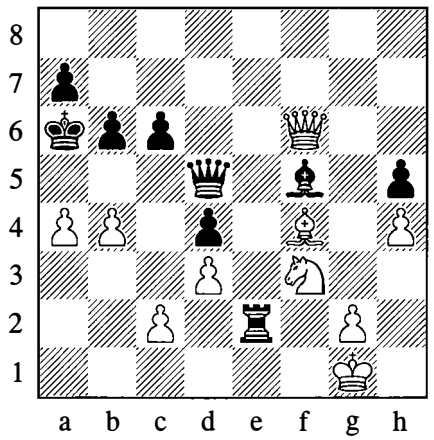
The result of the fine pawn combination is before us. White has a decisive material advantage, although he later went wrong and only drew.

...½–½

Continuing our hymn to the pawn, we would like to demonstrate a classic combination from the old days.

F. Marshall – S. Tarrasch

Nuremberg (13) 1905



Black is the exchange up, but the situation is sharp and full of combinative motifs – and the black king's position leaves something to be desired. Marshall makes excellent use of this circumstance; with unexpected combinative strokes based on the theme of the double attack, he neutralizes his opponent's material plus.

32.♕xc6!

Here already is the initial combination on the theme of the fork.

Instead, 32.♕xd4 would be dangerous as Black can fight for an advantage with 32...♕g8.

32...♕xc6 33.b5† ♔a5

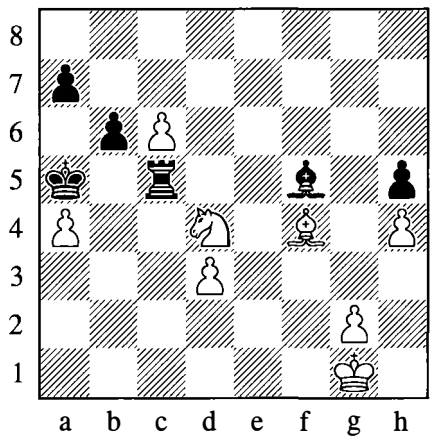
Another fork – by the white knight – is lurking in the position, and this prohibits the black king from going to c6 or b5. For that reason 33...♕xb5 or 33...♔b7 would be bad.

34.bxc6 ♖xc2?

A very risky move; 34...♖e8 35.♘xd4 ♗g4 is much safer.

35.♘xd4 ♖c5!

Black already has to worry about securing the draw. For that purpose 35...♗xd3 is inadequate; after 36.♘xc2 ♗xc2 37.g4! hxg4 38.h5 ♔a6 39.h6 b5 40.a5, White should win.



36.c7?

36.♗d6! would give White every chance of winning, for example: 36...♗xd3 37.♗xc5 bxc5 38.c7 ♗a6 39.♘b5 ♔xa4 40.g4!, or 36...♗c8 37.♗xc5 bxc5 38.♘b5 ♔b6 39.d4.

36...♗g4 37.♘b3† ♔b4 38.♘xc5 ♔xc5 39.a5 ♔d4 40.axb6 axb6 41.♔f2 ♔xd3 42.♗d6 b5 43.♗e7 ♔d4 44.♗d6 ♔e4 ½–½

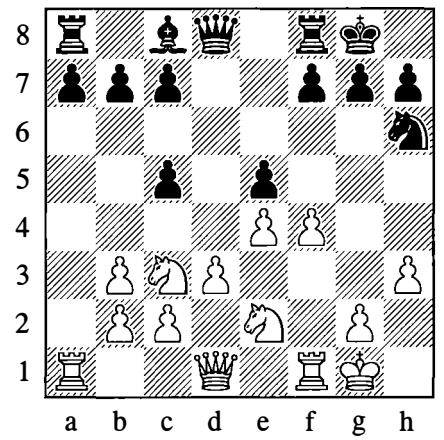
Let us briefly sum up. The combinative role of the modest foot soldier has appeared in diverse enough forms in all the examples we have given. The pawn both delivers mate itself and helps other pieces to organize a mating net. Forcing its way into the opponent's camp, sometimes through his blockading lines, the pawn contributes to various combinations by holding down substantial enemy reserves. Several technical devices fall to the lot of the pawn in its forward march. It deflects defenders, "interferes" with their communications, and destroys them.

Many a combinative idea finds its true executor in a pawn. To conclude, we will demonstrate a game in which White carried out a splendid combination with a pawn's assistance.

S. Tartakower – A. Rubinstein

Vienna Game
Moscow 1925

1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.♗e3 d6 6.♗xc5 dxc5 7.♘ge2 ♘a5 8.♗b3 ♘xb3 9.axb3 0–0 10.0–0 ♘g4 11.h3 ♘h6 12.f4



The manoeuvre ...♘f6-g4-h6 has not justified itself; White assumes the initiative. For the moment this is not dangerous – but possessing the advantage in the centre, White has reason to count on developing his initiative further.

12...exf4

This is essential; White was threatening to push his pawn to f5.

13.♘xf4 f6

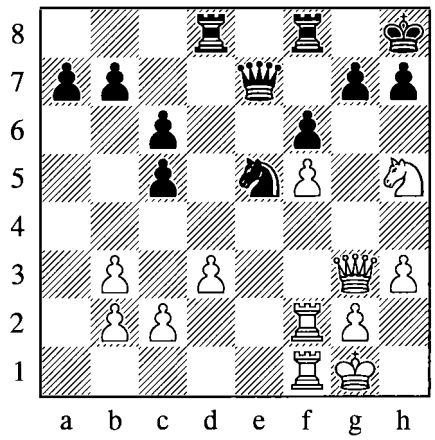
Black has chosen the e5-square as a base for his pieces. He will in fact succeed in settling his knight there, but it will be hard to derive any benefit from this because the initiative remains in White's hands.

14.♕f3 ♘f7 15.♖f2 ♘e5 16.♕g3 c6 17.♘h5 ♕e7 18.♖af1 ♔h8 19.♘d1 ♗d7

A very passive move, which in addition loses a tempo – for in two moves' time the bishop will have to capture White's knight on f5.

Black should have bestirred himself on the queenside, for example with 19...a5. Then White could not have gone ahead in such a carefree manner as happens in the game.

20.♘e3 ♖ad8 21.♘f5 ♗xf5 22.exf5



The open e-file benefits White. In addition Black has a "hole" on e6, and White's knight may head towards it.

22...♕d7 23.♖f4 ♖fe8 24.♔h1 ♖e7 25.♖e4 ♖de8

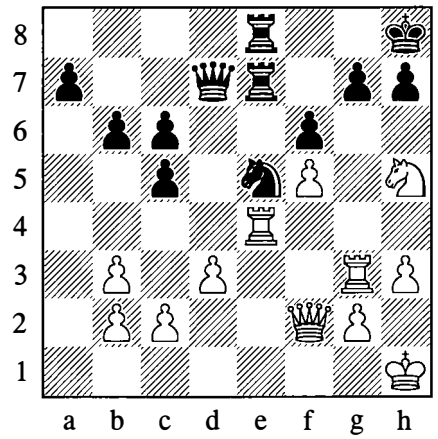
Black cannot derive anything from this centralization on the e-file either. With his control of space on the kingside, White begins to prepare tactical threats.

26.♕h4

White already threatens ♘xf6 etc.

26...♔g8 27.♕f2 b6 28.♖fe1 ♔h8 29.♖1e3 ♔g8 30.♖g3 ♔h8

Black doesn't suspect the immense potential power of the f5-pawn. White now unleashes a combination in which this power is mobilized.



31.♖xg7

A mine explodes in the well fortified stronghold. The rook opens the way for the knight, which in turn frees the path of the f-pawn.

31...♖xg7 32.♘xf6

The double attack by the knight can be seen as an intermediate theme of the combination.

32...♕e7 33.♘xe8 ♕xe8 34.♕f4!

The queen prepares the advance of the pawn.

The immediate 34.f6 would be needlessly hasty; then 34...♖g8 allows Black to fight on after 35.♕f4? ♕g6, or 35.♕e2 ♖g5.

34...♖e7 35.f6!

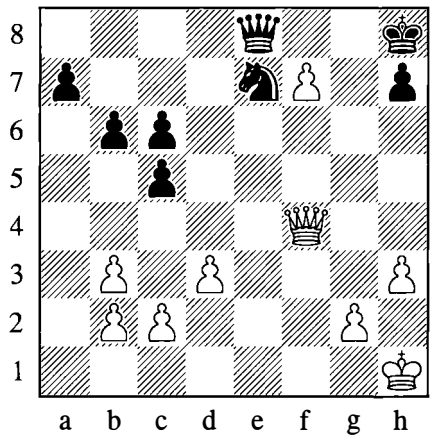
The forced advance of White's pawn to f7 brings Black's downfall in its wake.

35...♘g6

On 35...♖e6, a thematic finale ensues: 36.♖xe5! ♖xe5 37.f7 ♖e1† 38.♔h2 ♕f8 39.♕f6† and mate next move.

36.♖xe7! ♘xe7 37.f7!!

Here it is – the move that represents the theme of the combination. It deserves illustration.



Black resigned in anticipation of the mate hanging over his king: 37...♕f8 38.♕f6† ♕g7 39.f8=♕† ♘g8 40.♕6xg7#

1–0

With this we conclude our story of the combinative wonders performed by the magician pawn.

Proceeding to the following chapters, however, we have no intention at all of taking our final leave of the pawn as a participant in combinations. We are bound to come across the pawn again repeatedly in our study of individual combinative ideas.

Chapter 17

Positional Weakness as a Combinative Motif – Combinations Invited by Weaknesses in the Castled Position – Sacrifice of Bishop for Pawn on g3, h3, g6, h6

The combinative motifs to which we have already given so much attention are nothing other than positional weaknesses. A vulnerable back rank, an undefended piece, an open king position – these are all flaws which in suitable circumstances allow combinative ideas to step into the front line of the battle. A positional defect in the form of a weak square; points that are defended insufficiently or not at all; open files, ranks and diagonals – in appropriate positions, these can become factors in a combination. Habitual combinative motifs are weaknesses in the vicinity of the castled king. Pawns advanced to h3 and g3 (h6 and g6) serve repeatedly as objects of combinative attacks and targets for sacrifices. The points f2, g2 and h2 (f7, g7, and h7), if defended by the king alone, can at any moment supply valid grounds for the opponent's combination. Suffice it to recall the combinations with a bishop sacrifice on h7, and even the double bishop sacrifice on h7 and g7.

The following games by Nimzowitsch serve as an excellent illustration of how a plan that leads to the formation of positional weaknesses in the opposing camp can be transformed into a combinative mode of action. It is appropriate to note here that Nimzowitsch had a perfect command of the elements of the positional struggle. He wrote profound studies of the subject (*My System*, *Chess Praxis*, *The Blockade*). At the same time, Nimzowitsch was a brilliant master of combination.

L. Asztalos – A. Nimzowitsch

Caro-Kann Defence
Bled 1931

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘f6 5.♘xf6† exf6

As practice with this variation has shown, Black more often prefers 5...gxf6. From the competitive viewpoint, that move has also given better results.

6.c3

In this situation the Soviet Master Rauzer, a prominent opening theorist, successfully employed a plan involving g2-g3 and ♗g2. From this square the bishop would later support a pawn offensive on the left flank, where White has the majority.

6...♗d6 7.♗d3 0–0 8.♕c2 h6 9.♘e2 ♕c7 10.♗e3 ♘d7 11.♕d2

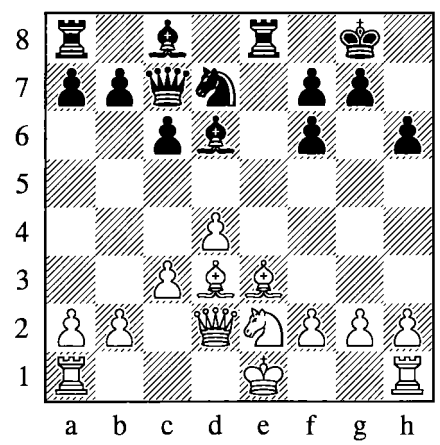
White is now threatening a combination with ♗xh6 and is reminding his opponent, so to speak, of the weakness of the h6 point. Black, however, has no objection to such a reminder, and will of course parry the threat. Was it nonetheless worth spending a tempo on setting up a threat that can easily be repulsed? Of course not.

It may have seemed to Asztalos that his threat was unanswerable, but most likely the Hungarian master expected the double attack on h6 to hamper his opponent by forcing him to watch this weakness constantly. However, this kind of motive for an action is faulty. Rather than create a threat just for the sake of it, a player needs to plan his game.

An excellent idea was 11.0–0–0, to be followed by a kingside pawn storm.

White could also begin active operations straight away, with 11.h4 and then g2-g4, threatening g5. In that kind of sharp attacking game, the potential for combination should also inevitably increase.

11...♖e8



12.♘g3?!

But this is wholly contrary to the spirit of the position. Of course, 12.0–0–0 was correct.

At this moment the bishop sacrifice with 12.♗xh6 gxh6 13.♕xh6 would be a mistake in view of the reply 13...♘f8, with the better position for Black.

12...♗f4 13.0–0

It was only with 13.0–0–0 that White could untie his hands for an attack on the kingside, but he is clearly avoiding any sharp play, preferring cautious manoeuvres while his own king's position is one hundred per cent safe.

13...♗xe3 14.fxe3 ♘f8

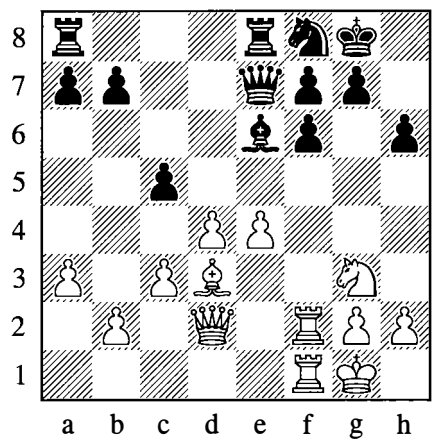
Nimzowitsch's plan will consist of creating dark-square weaknesses in his opponent's camp, seeing that the dark-squared bishops have been exchanged off. The basis of this plan is an advance of the c-pawn, which is why an immediate 15.b4 would be useful for White.

15.♖f2 ♕e7 16.e4 ♗e6 17.a3 c5

Black provokes the advance of the d-pawn, which would give him the opportunity to use the e5-square as a good base for his pieces.

18.♖af1

Again White threatens a combination – 19.♖xf6 gxf6 20.♕xh6 ♗g4 21.♖f4, after which Black faces a mating attack.



18...cxd4!

A pretty and convincing answer to White's combinative scheme. On 19.♖xf6, there now follows 19...dxc3 20.bxc3 gxf6 21.♕xh6 ♕c5† 22.♔h1 ♕g5.

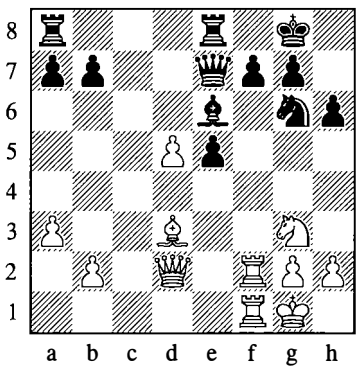
19.cxd4 ♘g6?

This move is a tactical error.

Black should immediately attack the d4-pawn with 19...♖ad8, aiming to force it to advance; after that, relying on e5 as a strong point, he can hope to seize the initiative.

20.d5?

After 20.e5! fxe5 21.d5!, Black's position would become critical.



For example: 21...♗xd5 22.♗xg6 ♖ad8 23.♕xd5!? ♖xd5 24.♗xf7† ♔h8 25.♗xd5, or 21...♗d7 22.♖xf7 ♕xf7 23.♖xf7 ♔xf7 24.♘e4 and Black is in trouble.

20...♗g4

Retreating the black bishop with 20...♗d7 allows the sacrifice 21.♖xf6 gxf6 22.♘h5. This looks extremely dangerous, although it seems that Black can survive with 22...♕c5† 23.♔h1 ♔f8, which leads to mind-bending complications – for example 24.♘xf6 ♔e7 25.♕xh6! ♕d4! 26.♘xd7 ♕xd3 27.♖xf7†! ♔d8! (27...♔xf7?? 28.♕h7#!) 28.h3 ♕xe4 29.♘c5 ♕e1† 30.♔h2 ♕e5†, with a draw.

The continuation selected by Nimzowitsch is undoubtedly more practical.

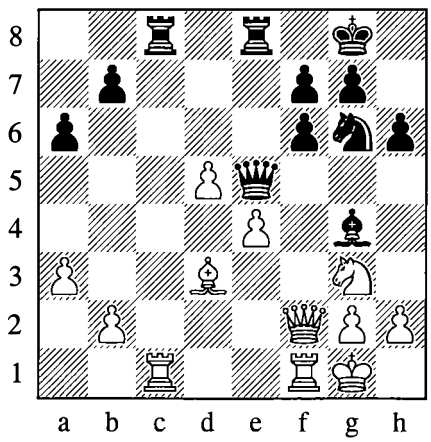
21.♖c1?

White abandons his hopes of achieving anything on the f-file.

If instead 21.h3, Black plays 21...♕e5!. Then the white knight will no longer be able to reach h5, and the springboard on e5 will afford Black abundant possibilities for taking the initiative.

White could have contended for the initiative at this point by playing 21.♗e2. After missing this chance, he soon lands in serious trouble.

21...♖ac8 22.♖ff1 ♕e5 23.♕f2 a6



24.h3

White continues to weaken his position – in the region of his castled king, too – and provides his opponent with ample scope for executing combinative ideas. To us it seems that the best defensive resource here was 24.♖xc8 ♖xc8 25.♖e1, aiming to meet ...♘f4 with ♗f1 and cherishing some hope of a sortie with ♕b6.

24...♗d7 25.♖fd1 ♕g5 26.♖xc8 ♖xc8

Now both the c-file, which Black has seized, and the weakened points g3 and h3 acquire the

status of combinative motifs; they encourage Black to seek a combinative solution to the crisis of the struggle. The dénouement comes about with unexpected speed.

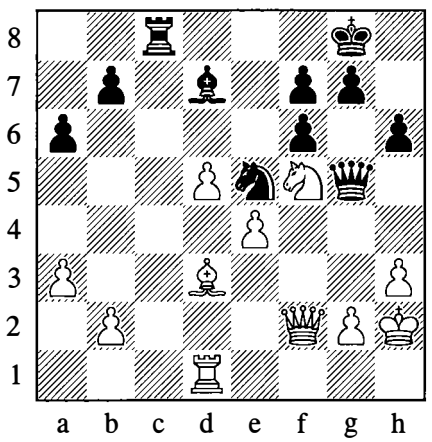
27.♔h2

White is already worried and starts taking measures to defend the h3-point, which at this moment is not yet threatened by anything. The clouds, however, are thickening; all Black's pieces are very actively placed, and in this atmosphere filled with tactical tension it may well be too late to stop the storm from breaking.

27...♘e5 28.♘f5

On 28.♕d2, a most unpleasant continuation from White's viewpoint would be 28...♘g4†! 29.♔g1 (29.♔h1 ♕xd2 30.♖xd2 ♖c1† 31.♘f1 ♘e3) 29...♕e5, with threats of ...♕xg3 and ...♕d4†.

Alternatively by simply playing 28...♕xd2 29.♖xd2 ♔f8, Black would obtain an ending with an easily exploitable advantage (the d6- and e5-squares).



28...♖c1! 29.♖d2

Not 29.♖xc1?, which loses a piece to 29...♘xd3.

Also 29.♕d2 ♖xd1 30.♕xd1 g6 31.♘g3 ♘g4† is a dismal prospect for White.

Combinations featuring double attacks are lighting up from all sides. But even after the move Asztalos chooses, a combinative showdown is inescapable.

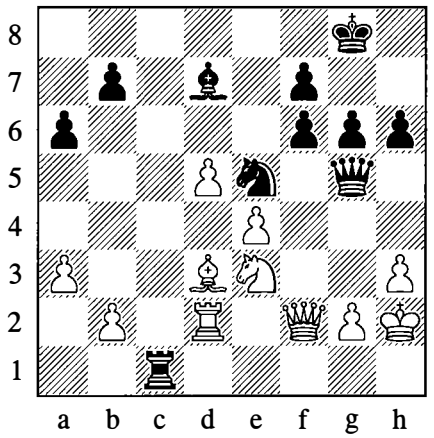
29...g6!

The splendid initial move of a combination in which all Black's pieces take part.

30.♘e3

If 30.♘d4, then 30...♘xd3 31.♖xd3 ♕e5† and ...♕xe4.

On 30.♘g3, White is mated in two moves by 30...♘g4†.



30...♗xh3!

Thus the positional weakness that arose in the process of Black's purposeful, well-planned play is exploited by combinative means. The idea is pretty: 31.gxh3 ♘f3†, and the white queen is forcibly diverted from the defence of g1. Nor can White play 31.♔xh3. In consequence, his king is almost entirely deprived of pawn cover, and g4 is added to his other weaknesses. Combinative blows threaten him one after the other.

The simple 30...♘xd3 31.♖xd3 ♕e5† 32.g3 ♕xe4 is also fully adequate for victory.

31.♗f1 ♗d7

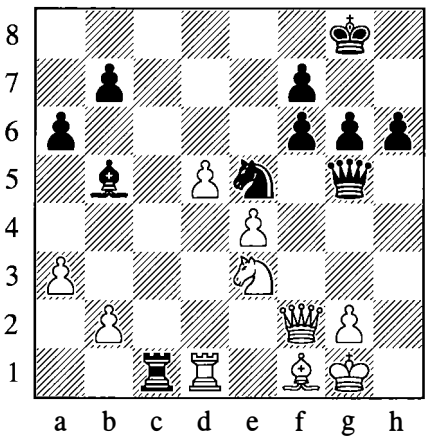
Threatening two more tactical strokes: 32...♕xe3 followed by ...♘g4†, and 32...♖xf1 33.♕xf1 ♕xe3.

32.♔g1 ♗b5

Again threatening the combinative 33...♕xe3 etc.

33.♖d1

White had no defence, and a new combination crowns the performance. The finale is elegant.



33...♕xe3! 34.♕xe3 ♖xd1 35.♕b6 ♘g4 36.g3 ♗xf1!

Mate by ...♗h3# is not to be averted.

0–1

Let us try to retrace the whole process of the play in this instructive game.

In the opening stage, White felt quite at ease. Black had selected a difficult line of the Caro-Kann Defence in which his kingside pawn structure is not entirely satisfactory. White secured a sturdy centre for himself, and had quite a good position on the flanks. Black conversely was obliged to take prophylactic measures in various directions, especially on the kingside. Asztalos emerged from the opening with an excellent game, but instead of logically utilizing his opening gains by castling long, he began to play passively, avoiding the sharp clashes which in that situation would have cleared the paths for him to seize the initiative.

Meanwhile, Black exchanged the dark-squared bishops and conducted a fight for control of the dark squares in the centre.

White failed to take advantage of the tactical mistake which his opponent committed on move 19. Nimzowitsch then achieved the object of his plan and gained mastery in the centre, setting up a convenient station for his pieces on e5.

From that moment on, Black took over the initiative for good and began preparing the decisive combinative attack. Then on move 24, White weakened his castled position with h2-h3. His various positional weaknesses in that area, together with Black's full control of e5 and seizure of the open c-file, created a state of tactical high tension. The first lightning flashes appeared from move 28 on, and the combinative storm burst with full force after Black's ...♗xh3 on move 30.

On the 33rd move Black struck the decisive combinative blow.

From this game we can see clearly that the attainment of a positional advantage is a prerequisite for combinative solutions, in which positional weaknesses assume the role of the chief combinative targets.

In the same vein, let us look at another of Nimzowitsch's games from the same tournament.

R. Spielmann – A. Nimzowitsch

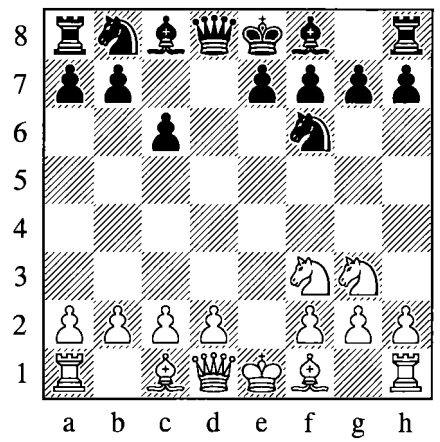
Caro-Kann Defence
Bled 1931

1.e4 c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘f6 5.♘g3

A somewhat artificial retreat which aims to avoid early exchanges and complicate the play. The continuation with 5.♘xf6† followed

by 6.d4, which had often occurred in the practice of this variation and was emphatically recommended by theory, might have seemed boring to the lover of combination that Spielmann, not without reason, was considered to be.

Nevertheless it is not advisable to repudiate something supported by ample experience, which has been tested as a sure means of obtaining a sound position in the centre. Moreover the knight's retreat is, after all, a loss of time.



5...c5

Nimzowitsch immediately highlights White's omission to seize the centre, and endeavours to give him no more chance to carry out d2-d4 unhindered. For all that, his ...c5 possesses power to convince psychologically rather than objective chess strength.

A good continuation for Black at this point is the sharp 5...h5. If White then plays something other than 6.h4 or 6.h3 – say 6.♗c4 – Black will push his pawn to h3 and seriously weaken the light squares of his opponent's kingside castling position.

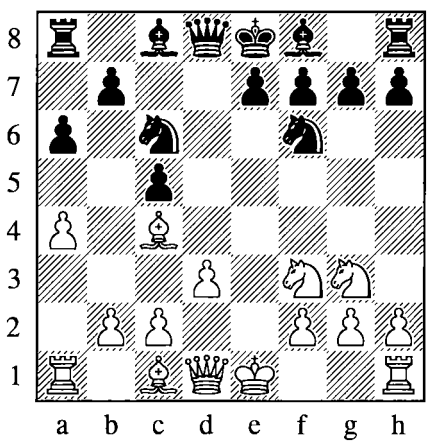
6.♗c4

Not bad of course, but even now Black could have been given more trouble by 6.d4, and if 6...cxd4 then 7.♕xd4!. This too, however, would not have suited Spielmann's style, even though it *would* have suited the position.

6...a6 7.a4 ♘c6

Now that White has twice voluntarily refrained from d2-d4, Black achieves a strong position in the centre by harmoniously exerting pressure on the d4-point with a number of his pieces. From here, seizure of the initiative is not far off.

8.d3



8...g6

The king's bishop too fixes its sights on the d4-square. Black has decided to develop both his bishops in flank positions. Of course, the choice of plan is a matter of a chess player's taste when certain alternatives present themselves. The plan selected by Nimzowitsch leads to a complex game, in which all the various possibilities arising for both opponents are hard to foresee.

A more lucid position, and (if we may put it this way) a more elastic one, would result from 8...♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 e6 11.0–0 ♗e7 12.♖e1 0–0. This situation, in which a manoeuvring game is to be expected, is more

convenient for Black. His pieces possess more lines of operation for purposeful regrouping and manoeuvres. We may point to the d-file, the d8-a5 diagonal, and the routes open to the knights: c6-d4, f6-d7-e5. Depending on the subsequent shape of the game and the course of the struggle, these might all prove useful channels for implementing his plans.

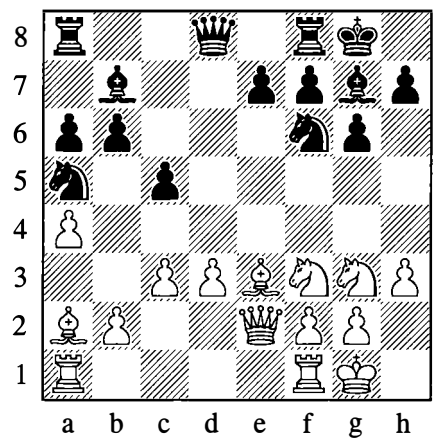
9.♗e3 ♗g7 10.0–0

The variation 10.♗xc5 ♕a5† 11.b4 ♘xb4 would favour Black, but now White *is* threatening to take the pawn.

10...b6 11.c3 0–0 12.h3

Not 12.♕e2 at once, as White was rightly afraid of the continuation 12...♗g4 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 ♘e5.

12...♗b7 13.♕e2 ♘a5 14.♗a2



14...♗d5!

At first sight, the exchange that Nimzowitsch offers is not wholly understandable. The point f7 could easily be shielded by ...e6 if the need should arise. In actual fact, by exchanging the light-squared bishops, Black is initiating a profound plan for attacking on the queenside, which first of all requires the creation of light-square weaknesses there.

This is similar to Nimzowitsch's game with Asztalos, in which he exchanged off the dark-squared bishops as the start of an operation to weaken the dark squares.

15.♘d2 ♗xa2 16.♖xa2 ♘d5 17.♘c4 ♘c6

Clearly the exchange of knights would be contrary to Black's plan as indicated in the previous note.

18.a5

This operation leads to great complications, of which the consequences were impossible to foresee in over-the-board play.

It is *Black's* plan that involves joining battle on the queenside. Instead of falling in with his opponent's intention, it would be useful for White to undertake a diversion on the other wing. For example, the advance h3-h4-h5 ought to cause Black a certain amount of anxiety.

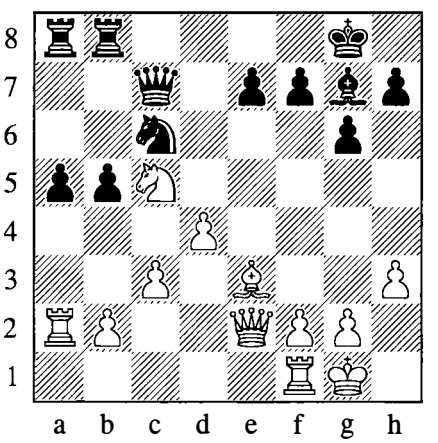
18...b5 19.♘b6

Giving up his a-pawn for the c5-pawn and exchanging off Black's centralized knight, it might seem that White can be satisfied.

19...♘xb6 20.axb6 ♕xb6 21.♘e4 ♕c7 22.♘xc5

However, as now becomes clear, the measures White has taken have not prevented Black's queenside offensive.

22...a5 23.d4 ♖fb8



24.f4

After some delay, Spielmann does after all attempt to start active operations on the kingside, especially since Black's attack, for the moment, contains no direct threats, and the knight on c5 is occupying a strong position. White threatens to play d4-d5, then ♗d4, and finally f4-f5.

However, it would be better to refrain from this move that weakens White's own position, and play for example 24.♕f3 – to be followed, depending on the circumstances, by ♖e1, ♗f4 or h3-h4.

24...e6 25.♖aa1?

White's wish to establish contact between this rook and the kingside pieces is legitimate, but he is missing a chance to play 25.f5. Black should respond with 25...exf5 26.♗f4 ♘xd4! 27.cxd4 ♗xd4† 28.♔h1 ♕xc5 29.♗xb8 ♖xb8 30.♖xa5, which in the end would probably lead to a peaceful outcome, even though Black's chances here are a little better.

At any rate, this continuation would have suited White better than what happened in the game. His last move, then, can be viewed as the decisive error.

25...♘e7!

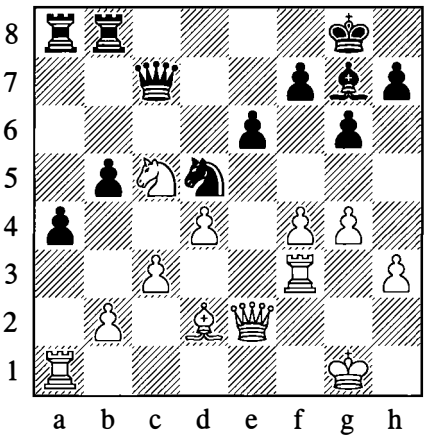
Black exploits the light squares in an artistic manner. Everything is now blocked, and combinative ideas are arriving on the scene. For instance if now 26.f5, Black has 26...♘xf5 27.♗f4 ♘xd4 etc., as indicated above. All the same, White should have opted for this line as the least of the evils.

26.g4 ♘d5 27.♖f3

Defending g3 from a queen check, and thereby preparing f4-f5.

27...a4 28.♗d2

This prophylactic move also has to be made, as the immediate 28.f5 could be answered most unpleasantly by 28...exf5 29.gxf5 ♖e8.



28...♕c6!

The final preparatory move for the break with ...b4; Black is defending the sixth rank as well as the a4-pawn, and this further improves the conditions for his breakthrough.

It was also worth considering the immediate 28...b4. The point is that 29.♘a6 fails to 29...♖xa6 30.♕xa6 a3, when the creation of a passed pawn on the queenside decides the game in Black's favour; while 29.♖xa4 is answered by 29...♖xa4 30.♘xa4 ♖a8, with ...♖a2 to follow.

29.♘e4

At this point, 29.f5 would be met by 29...exf5 30.gxf5 ♖e8, and would thus merely concede the e-file to Black and lead to a further dislocation of White's castled position.

White therefore tries bringing up his knight to join the forces on the right wing; and on his very next move he will endeavour to breach Black's king position with f4-f5, which has been maturing for so long. However, Black's attack comes first.

29...b4 30.f5 exf5 31.gxf5 a3!

Combinative threats are hanging over

White's position. Such is the logical outcome of Black's positional breakthrough on the queenside. A colourful position!

32.bxa3 bxc3 33.f6

On 33.♗xc3, Black plays 33...♘xc3 and then ...♗xd4†, with a double attack.

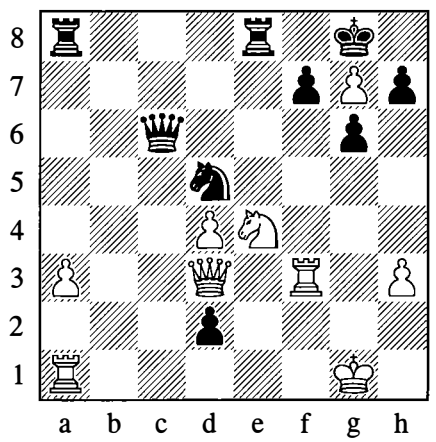
33...cxd2

So this pawn with its combinative potential, to which we almost said goodbye a moment ago, again steps forward on the stage. It will prove a substantial factor in the ensuing tactics.

34.fxg7 ♖e8!

Against 34...♕c1† White covers with 35.♖f1, but now he cannot avert combinations based on an exchange sacrifice on e4. At present, apart from that sacrifice, Black is threatening ...f5 or ...♕e6.

35.♕d3



35...♖xe4!

The atmosphere demands to be cleared, and the inevitable moment has come for the combinative conclusion to Black's plan of attack on the queenside.

36.♕xe4 ♖e8 37.♕h4

The other variation of the combination goes 37.♕d3 ♖e1† 38.♖f1 ♘f4 39.♕xd2 ♖e2, and White must give up his queen to avoid mate.

37...♘c3 38.♖ff1 ♕d5

Struggling against the d2-pawn is useless. A curious point is that this is the very same modest foot soldier that White, with his 18th move, voluntarily admitted to the frontier post b5.

At the moment Black is threatening ...♖e4 first and foremost, but there are other threats as well.

0–1

In the following game, which was awarded a brilliancy prize, disaster overtakes Black on the g6-square.

H. Pillsbury – H. Wolf

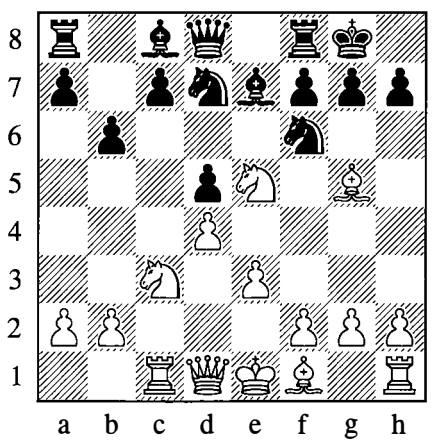
Queen's Gambit
Monte Carlo 1903

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♘bd7 5.♘f3 ♗e7 6.e3 0–0 7.♖c1 b6

For a discussion of this method of development, see Chapter 4.

8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘e5

In earlier games Pillsbury had played this move only after ♗d3 and 0–0, which to us seems more rigorous and logical.



9...♗b7

With this reply, the opening switches back to the theoretical tracks.

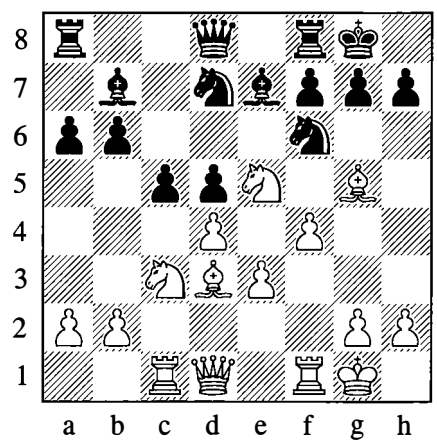
9...♘xe5 is an interesting attempt to take the initiative at the cost of a pawn, but it seems that White can defuse this idea with accurate play. Play may continue 9...♘xe5 10.dxe5 ♘g4 11.♗xe7 (11.♗f4 also looks promising) 11...♕xe7 and now:

a) 12.♘xd5 ♕xe5 13.♘xc7 ♕xb2 14.♗e2 ♖b8 15.♗xg4 15.0–0 with approximate equality.

b) 12.♕xd5 ♗e6 13.♕e4 f5 14.exf6 ♘xf6 followed by ...♖ad8, and Black's lead in development provides a degree of compensation for the pawn.

c) 12.h3! ♘xe5 13.♘xd5 and White wins the pawn on c7 without losing the one on b2; Black lacks sufficient compensation.

10.f4 a6 11.♗d3 c5 12.0–0



12...c4

Black is in a difficult situation. But the plan of a queenside pawn offensive, which Wolf chooses, is premature to say the least, seeing that White's attack on the kingside is much quicker.

It is no good playing 12...♘e4? 13.♗xe7 ♕xe7 14.♗xe4 dex4 15.♘xd7 ♕xd7 16.dxc5 ♕xd1 17.♖fxd1 bxc5 18.♘a4, after which White wins a pawn.

It would make sense to play 12...♖e8 and then ...♘f8, in order to reinforce the weakest point in Black's castled position – the h7-square.

13.♗f5 b5 14.♖f3 ♖e8 15.♖h3

The situation becomes menacing, on account of the "permanent weakness" in Black's castled position – the h7-pawn.

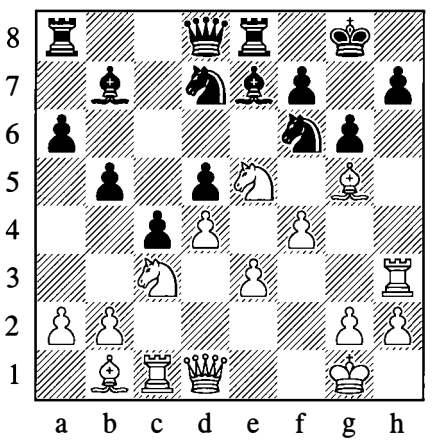
15...g6

Defending the h-pawn in this way is forced, but it comes at the high price of seriously weakening the point h6. As we shall soon see, f6 is also insecure, as is even the g6-point. It goes without saying that weaknesses in the vicinity of the king become combinative motifs.

After 15...♘f8?, the tactical storm would already burst with 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♗xh7† ♘xh7 18.♕h5 ♗xe5 19.♕xh7† ♔f8 20.fxe5, leaving Black in a bad enough way.

A different tragedy would unfold in response to 15...h6?, namely 16.♘xd7 ♘xd7 17.♗xh6 gxh6 18.♕g4† ♔f8 19.♗xd7.

16.♗b1



16...♘xe5

Black was afraid of the f4-f5 push. But the continuation selected by Wolf opens the important f-file for White's operations; and all the weaknesses in Black's king position, which we have noted already, become real objects of attack. The situation becomes sharper and more tense – weaknesses start to call for combinations, the atmosphere of the struggle thickens, and a tactical showdown becomes logically inevitable.

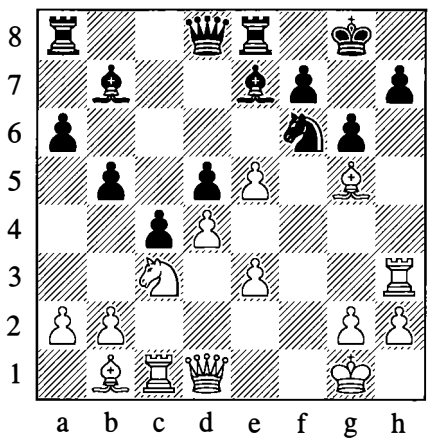
The point g6, of course, is a source of worry, but Black could still defend it from f8 with his knight. Incidentally, 16...♘f8 would also make it possible to bring the bishop to the defence via c8.

The best option of all for Black was 16...♘e4 17.♗xe4 dxe4.

Now White should avoid the tempting 18.♕g4, which can be met by 18...♗xg5!, after which the advantage is on Black's side – for example, 19.♘xd7 ♗xf4! 20.exf4 f5.

Instead, White's chances rest on an unexpected piece sacrifice: 18.♘xf7! ♔xf7 19.♖xh7† ♔g8 20.♖h6 followed by ♕g4 and an attack on the h-file.

17.fxe5

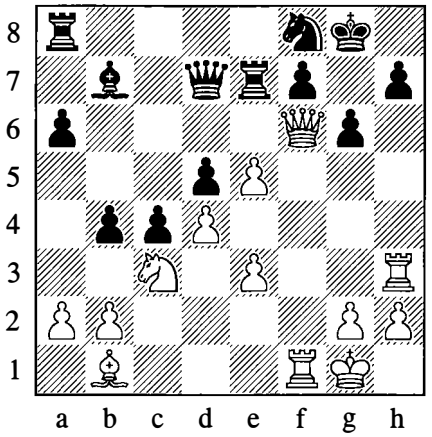


17...♘d7?

After this retreat, Black's position is too passive. He had to play 17...♘e4.

18.♗xe7 ♖xe7 19.♕f3 ♘f8 20.♖f1 ♕d7 21.♕f6 b4

Black has evidently missed White's reply, but even in the case of 21...♖e6 22.♕g5 b4 23.♘e2, with ♘f4 to follow, his position would remain difficult.



22.♘a4! ♕c7

The white knight is invulnerable. If 22...♖e6, then 23.♕f4 ♕xa4? 24.♕xf7† ♔h8 25.♕xb7, and with the threat of ♖xf8† followed by ♕h7#, White wins.

23.♘c5

All five of White's pieces have occupied strong attacking positions. The decisive combination can be expected from one minute to the next.

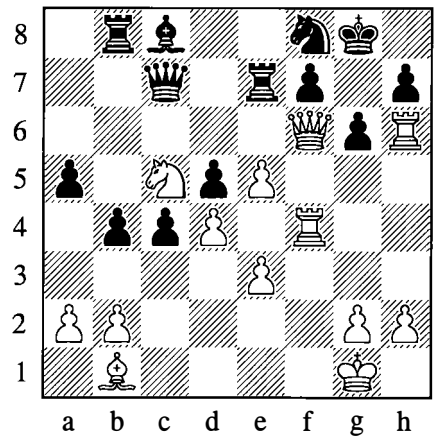
23...♗c8 24.♖h6 a5 25.♖f4

The final preparatory move.

25...♖b8

Black has not weighed up his opponent's last move. His chance of resisting could only lie in 25...♖e8, defending f8 and stopping the threatened combination for the moment.

The initiative, and a dangerous one too, would nonetheless remain in White's hands; his pressure, with its combinative potential, would not slacken. There could follow 26.♖fh4 ♕e7 27.♕f3 ♗e6 28.g4, with the threat of ♕h3.



26.♗xg6!

The dark squares have fulfilled their "dark" design. Mates on h8 and f8 make this combinative stroke possible and sound. The bastion on g6 was protecting Black's entire fortress. The point is that 26...♘xg6 is met by 27.♖xg6† hxg6 28.♖h4.

26...♖b6 27.♕xb6

This "spectacular" move seems to have been the chief reason why Pillsbury was awarded the special prize for brilliancy. But a queen sacrifice like this one scarcely gives aesthetic satisfaction, seeing that a quick win could have been achieved even without recourse to it.

After 27.♗xh7† (or 27.♗xf7†) Black would probably have acknowledged that it was pointless to play on.

And the quickest of all the ways to win is 27.e6, with forced mate in a few moves.

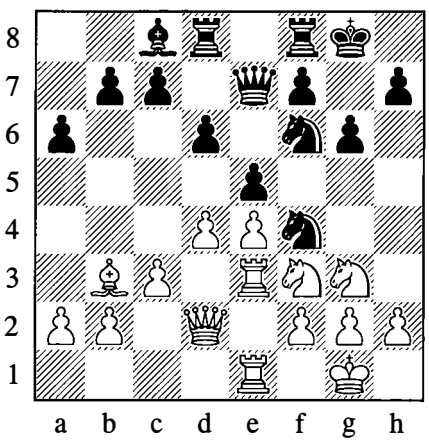
27...♘xg6 28.♕f6 ♖e8

White was threatening combinations on the same themes as before (sacrifices against g6), but if Black did want to continue resistance, he needed to play 28...♘xf4 29.exf4 c3 30.bxc3 bxc3 31.♖h5 ♖e8. Naturally he would still have lost.

29.♖f1 ♗e6 30.♕g5 ♔h8 31.♕h5 ♘f8 32.♘xe6 ♖xe6 33.♖xe6
1–0

H. Nolmann – A. Alekhine

Buenos Aires 1926



Black has just played 18...♗g4-c8, threatening to win the exchange by ...♘g4.

19.♖d1

White could stop the threat with 19.h3. If Black then goes for the combination 19...♗xh3 20.gxh3 ♕d7, White can defend with 21.♘h4, with the point 20.♕xh3? 21.♘gf5.

19...♘g4 20.♖ee1 ♔h8

Black intends to play ...f6 and then prepare a kingside offensive under cover of his well fortified centre.

21.h3

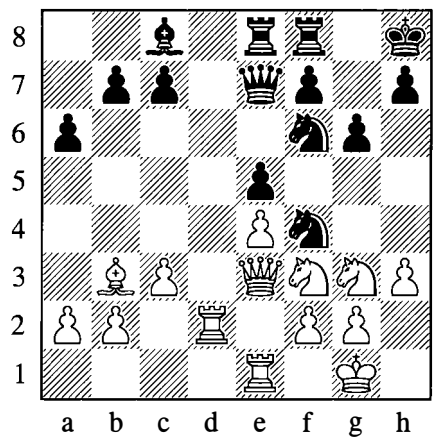
The knight on g4 is playing on White's

nerves, and he decides it is worth weakening his castled position if only the "pestering" knight can be thrown a little further back. Now the h3-pawn becomes a target for combination, and Black will start concentrating his attention on ...♗xh3.

21...♘f6 22.♕e3 ♖de8

In Alekhine's view, the bishop sacrifice at this point would be unclear. He gave the variation 22...♗xh3 23.gxh3 ♘xh3† 24.♔g2 ♘g4 25.♕c1 ♘hxf2? 26.♖d2 etc. Black can improve with 25...♘f4† 26.♔g1 h5, maintaining some pressure, although the situation is still not at all clear.

23.dxe5 dxe5 24.♖d2



24...♗xh3

A notable point is that when going in for this combination, Alekhine wasn't convinced that the sacrifice was totally correct.

25.gxh3 ♘xh3† 26.♔f1

On 26.♔g2, the continuation could be 26...♘f4† 27.♔f1 ♘g4 28.♕a7 ♘h3, with mutual chances.

26...♘g4 27.♕d3?

The correct move here is 27.♕a7, just as in the variation from the previous note.

27...♕f6?

Black could have claimed a big advantage by playing 27...♖d8 at once, and then continuing as in the game.

28.♗d1?

White misses his last chance to resist – with 28.♖ed1.

28...♖d8 29.♕c2 ♖xd2 30.♕xd2 ♖d8 31.♕e2 ♘xf2 32.♗c2 h5

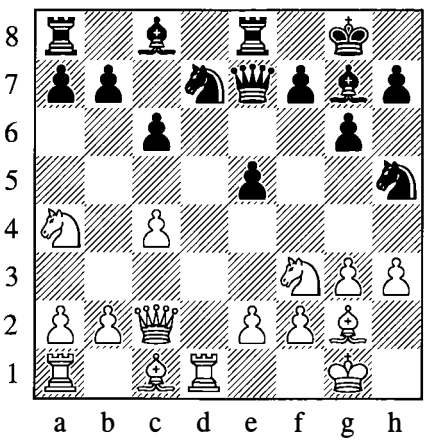
And Black went on to win.

...0–1

V. Goglidze – S. Flohr

King's Indian Defence
Moscow 1935

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.g3 0–0 5.♗g2 d6 6.0–0 ♘bd7 7.♕c2 e5 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♖d1 ♕e7 10.♘c3 c6 11.♘a4?! ♖e8 12.h3 ♘h5



White's castled position has been weakened by the advance of his g- and h-pawns. A particularly weak point is g3, and it is in this direction that Black has already started exerting pressure by placing his knight on h5. This ought to have made White proceed with circumspection. However, White was evidently intent on active operations on the queenside,

where he started preparing an offensive two moves ago.

13.c5?

Cherishing the idea of penetrating sooner or later to the weak point d6. His mistake lay in not giving due attention to his opponent's concrete possibilities, and as a result he overlooked an elegant combination.

13...e4 14.♘d4 e3! 15.♗xe3 ♘xg3

New lines of approach to the white king have now been opened; Black firmly grasps the initiative, which quickly turns into an attack.

16.♖ac1 ♘f6 17.♘c3 ♘fe4 18.♘xe4

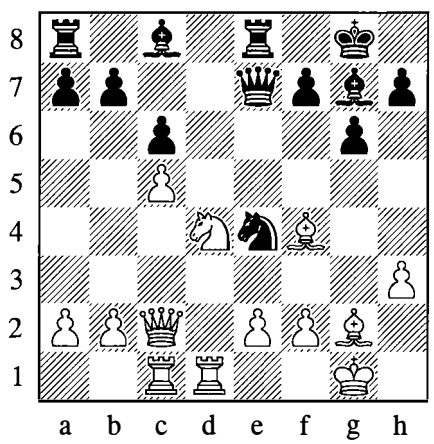
The lesser evil was to go into a worse ending after 18.fxg3 ♘xc3 19.♕xc3 ♕xe3† 20.♕xe3 ♖xe3 21.♔f2.

18...♘xe4

White's position is scarcely defensible. Black threatens ...♘g5, and in general terms White's shaky king position, as a serious target for combination, leads us to expect new outbreaks of tactics.

19.♗f4

At this point if White goes into an ending by taking twice on e4, he loses the pawn on h3.



19...♘f2!

The last bulwarks collapse.

19...♗xh3! 20.♗xh3 ♕h4 is also strong.

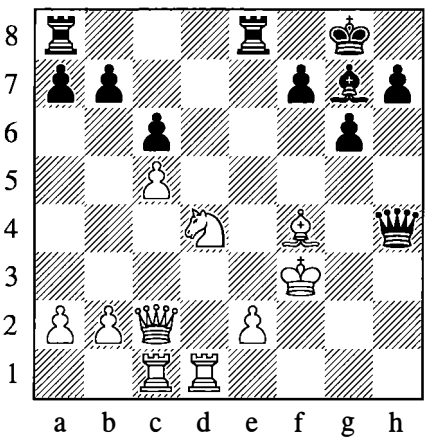
20.♔xf2 ♕h4†

The double attack theme.

21.♔f3 ♗xh3 22.♗xh3 ♕xh3† 23.♔f2

If 23.♗g3 then 23...♗e5.

23...♕h4† 24.♔f3



24...♗e5! 25.e3 ♗xf4

Black has exchanged off the bishop that was the lifeblood of the defence.

26.exf4 ♕h3† 27.♔f2 ♖e3

The threat now is ...♖g3.

28.♖g1 ♖ae8 29.♖g2 ♕h4†
0–1

A superb tactical rout, in which the positional weaknesses of White's castled position were brilliantly exploited as targets for combination.

Returning to the position before White's 13th move, there is a question we will want to ask: surely all that didn't happen because of 13.c5? Of course it did not. That move, as they say, merely added fuel to the flames. After other

moves by White, his kingside weaknesses would not at all have disappeared, and they would have made themselves felt as the struggle developed.

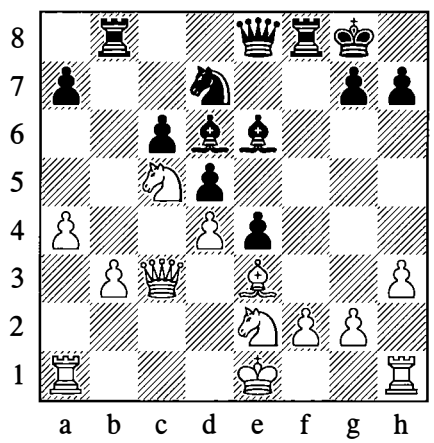
All the same, instead of 13.c5?, White ought to have set about bolstering those weaknesses with the manoeuvre ♘f3-d2-f1; but that would have meant conceding the initiative to Black. Sometimes, alas, such decisions just have to be taken.

The cause of White's difficulties lay first and foremost in the moves 11.♘a4?! and 12.h3, but even earlier his opening plan suffered from a lack of clear purpose. The exchange of pawns on e5, for example, was not in the spirit of the position.

The following position was reached after a very sharp opening (3...f5 against the Ruy Lopez).

J. Szily – D. Bronstein

Hungary – USSR match, Budapest 1949



Any chess player would prefer Black's position here, for many reasons. What is especially unpleasant for White is the position of his king. Leaving it in the centre is obviously bad. Castling long is also scarcely acceptable; the king can expect no comfort on that side. There would seem to be only one solution left – to try to hide the king on the kingside, within its own domain so to speak. Yet even in its own dwelling it will hardly manage to rest. On that wing it is Black who controls the space, secured by the sturdy pawn chain c6-d5-e4. Moreover White has played h2-h3, which in these circumstances weakens the castled position and offers a very substantial target for a combination. Nonetheless there followed:

24.0–0

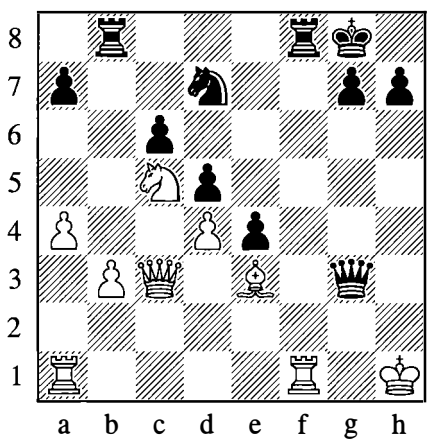
White would have liked to preface this by an exchange on e6, but alas, 24.♘xe6 is met by 24...♗b4.

24...♗xh3! 25.♘g3

White will be forced to accept the sacrifice, if not this move then next move.

On the immediate 25.gxh3, the continuation could be 25...♕g6† 26.♔h1 ♖f3 27.♘g1 ♕h5 28.♔g2 ♖xh3! 29.♘xh3 ♕xg4† 30.♔h1 ♕xh3† and 31...♕h2#.

25...♕g6 26.gxh3 ♗xg3 27.♔h1 ♕h5 28.fxg3 ♕xh3† 29.♔g1 ♕xg3† 30.♔h1



30...♖f3 31.♖xf3 ♕xf3† 32.♔g1 ♘xc5 33.dxc5 ♕g3† 34.♔h1 ♖f8

The decisive intervention of the reserves!

35.♕e1 ♕f3† 36.♔g1 ♖f6 37.♗f2

If 37.♕f2, then 37...♖g6† 38.♔f1 ♕h1† and 39...♕xa1.

37...♖g6† 38.♔f1 ♕h3† 39.♔e2 ♕d3#

The following game too serves as an instructive and beautiful illustration of the combinative exploitation of weaknesses in the castled position.

B. Gurgenidze – M. Tal

Modern Benoni
24th USSR Championship, Moscow 1957

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5

This "cramping" move, preventing the black queen's knight from developing "normally" on c6, is considered by many to be the best continuation. There have been, and are, eminent masters who have allowed such wedge-shaped pawn salients, protruding into enemy territory, to form a cornerstone of their approach to chess. The question of the wedge formation was elucidated in detail in Part One of this book, to which we would refer the reader at this stage. It is of course a purely positional matter.

Nonetheless in the present context we may be permitted one observation of a general nature. When a centre pawn advances to the 5th rank in the opening, it quickly becomes an object of attack. Furthermore such a pawn advance usually means abandoning the fight for the initiative in the centre and assenting to the opponent's influence on the squares of a particular colour. In the French Defence for example, the move e4-e5 grants Black the possibility of working up play on the light squares, while he has similar chances on the dark squares in the Modern Benoni line that occurs in the present game.

We have made these points in order to show that opinions on the best continuation here (in answer to 2...c5) are subjective. The replies 3.dxc5 and 3.♘f3 are sufficiently energetic; with these moves White's strategic prospects are by no means worse, and possibly better, than with 3.d5.

3...e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘f3 g6 7.e4 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0–0 9.0–0 ♖e8 10.♘d2 ♘a6 11.♖e1

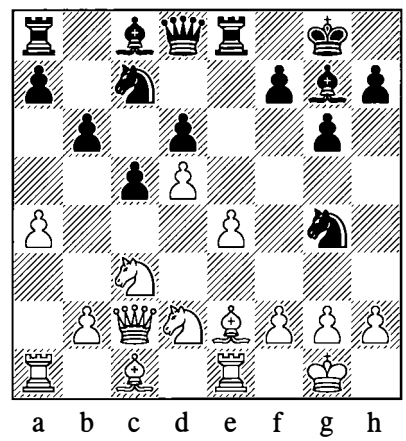
This is not a bad move in itself, but it does mean that White will have to pay attention to the weakened f2-point.

[Editor's note: In our day, the main line is 11.f3 ♘c7 12.a4.]

11...♘c7 12.a4 b6 13.♕c2

It was worth considering 13.♗f3 ♘d7 14.♘c4 ♘e5 15.♘xe5 ♗xe5 16.♗e2.

13...♘g4



14.h3?

But this is quite unacceptable rashness. The knight should of course be taken; after 14.♗xg4 ♗xg4 15.♘c4 the advantage is with White.

Now, however, a rapid combinative whirlwind sweeps over White's kingside, visiting fearful devastation on the white king's entourage within a brief space of time.

14...♘xf2!

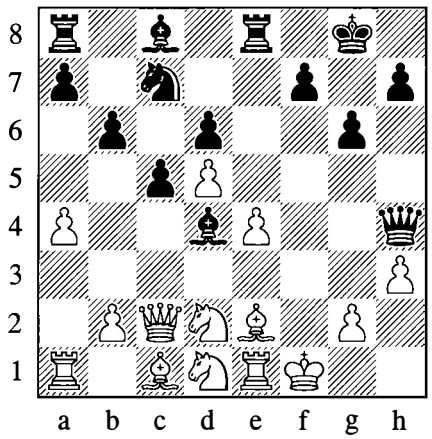
The king is requested to step outside.

15.♔xf2 ♕h4† 16.♔f1

On 16.g3, Black plays 16...♗d4† with a quick mate.

16...♗d4 17.♘d1

The combination is in full swing, but White has not yet perceived its theme.



17...♕xh3!

A murderous blow! Black answers 18.gxh3 with 18...♗xh3#. This "pure" mate with two bishops constitutes the theme of his combination.

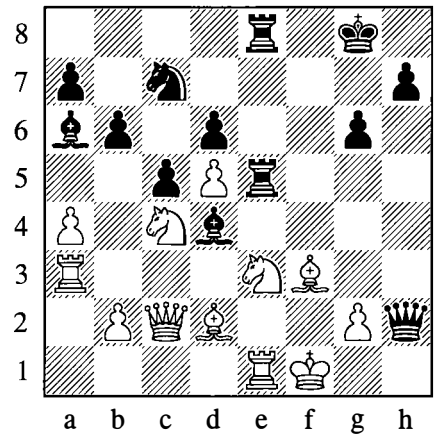
18.♗f3 ♕h2 19.♘e3 f5 20.♘c4 fxe4 21.♗xe4 ♗a6 22.♗f3

Black is still a piece down, and his opponent's pieces have succeeded in coming to the aid of their king. At first, the impression is that White has put the worst terrors behind him. But this is only the first impression. The white king's position, assailed by four powerful pieces, remains extremely insecure and threatens to become the object of new combinations.

22...♖e5

White's king is unable to slip away from the combination zone. Thus if 23.♔e2, then 23...♖ae8 24.♖a3 ♕f4 25.♔d1 ♗xc4 26.♕xc4 ♗xe3, and after recovering what he sacrificed, Black emerges with a large material plus.

23.♖a3 ♖ae8 24.♗d2



24...♘xd5!

Another good move was 24...♕f4.

25.♗xd5 ♖xd5 26.♔e2

Or 26.♘xd5? ♕h1#.

26...♗xe3 27.♖axe3 ♗xc4†

Now on 28.♕xc4 Black plays 28...♕xg2† 29.♔d1 ♕xd2#, while 28.♔d1 is met by 28...♖xe3 29.♖xe3 ♕xg2 etc.

0–1

In the examples we have given so far, the sacrifice of a piece for pawns that had advanced in front of the castled position amounted to a combination with mainly lucid themes, and with concrete results and conclusions that were quickly revealed.

In the next game, the soundness of the combination with a sacrifice of a bishop for a pawn on h6 was the subject of great controversy for a long time. To this day, it seems, there are those who maintain that the combination, or more precisely the sacrifice, was incorrect. The game was nonetheless awarded a special

prize as the best game of the tournament, and perhaps the obscurity, difficulty and riskiness of the sacrifice even played a role in the judges' decision.

D. Bronstein – P. Keres

Nimzo-Indian Defence
Interzonal Tournament, Gothenburg 1955

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 c5 5.♗d3 b6 6.♘ge2 ♗b7 7.0–0 cxd4

Without adequate justification, Black declines to fight for equilibrium in the centre with ...d5. The purpose of his pawn exchange is to give his bishop on b4 the option of retreating, but in the present position this is merely an isolated task that could have been solved later.

8.exd4 0–0

Black now intends to play 9...d5, but White takes action first.

9.d5 h6

There would be no benefit in playing 9...exd5 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xd5 ♗xd5 12.♗xh7† (perhaps 12.♘f4 ♗b7 13.♘h5 is even more energetic) 12...♔xh7 13.♕xd5 ♘c6 14.♗f4, with a good game and the initiative for White.

For the moment, then, Black decides to prevent a pin with ♗g5. In the present situation, however, the idea of a sacrifice on h6 arises immediately, seeing that Black is badly developed while the white pieces are conveniently positioned for a kingside attack. In other words the h6-pawn is a weakness in Black's castled position, and he would do better to think up something else – perhaps 9...♖e8, although even then White would retain the initiative after the simple 10.a3.

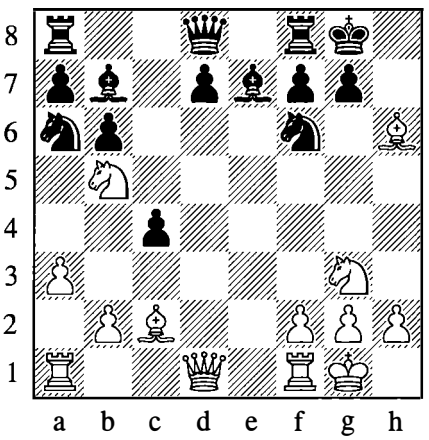
10.♗c2 ♘a6 11.♘b5

The start of one of the deepest combinations of our time. White is threatening to win the bishop by a2-a3.

11...exd5 12.a3 ♗e7 13.♘g3 dxc4

The point of this move is not so much to gain a second pawn – though that too, of course, is not a bad thing – as rather to obstruct the path of the white queen, which otherwise (after ♘f5) could go via f3 or d3 to g3.

14.♗xh6!

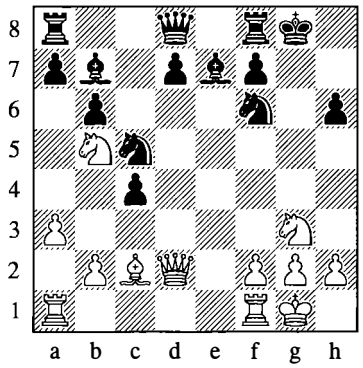


White's 11th and 13th moves were preparation for this sacrifice, which Black is compelled to accept. White's basic threat then consists of ♕d1-d2xh6 followed by ♘f5 or ♘h5.

14...gxh6 15.♕d2 ♘h7

Black cannot defend the h6-pawn. His task is to find ways of stemming the direct attack from three white pieces – queen, bishop and knight. With the move in the game he achieves this purpose, albeit with some material losses. Did he have anything better? The most light was thrown on this issue by Grandmaster Bondarevsky, who demonstrated in a detailed analysis that even after 15...♘c5 – the move recommended as best by many annotators – Black is unable to save the game.

We will give a few variations from that analysis:
15...♘c5



16.♖ae1!

This move controls the e4-square and is a crucial link in the attack.

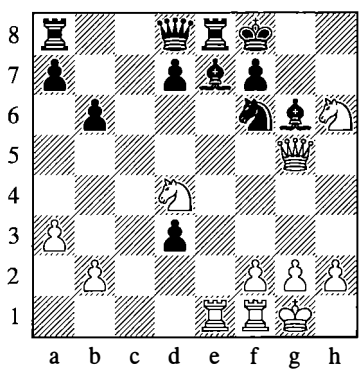
On 16.♕xh6, Black manages to bring his queen's bishop to the defence with 16...♗e4, making the further progress of the attack more difficult. Thus, he can calmly answer 17.♕g5† with 17...♗g6. Even in this line, however, White retains attacking chances by continuing 17.♘xe4, though in all likelihood, after 17...♘fxe4 the most White can hope for is a draw.

16...♘d3 17.♗xd3 cxd3 18.♘f5 ♗e4

On 18...♖e8, White plays: 19.♘xh6† ♔f8 20.♕g5 ♗c5 21.♘f5 ♖e6 22.♕g7† ♔e8 23.♕h8† ♗f8 24.♘bd6#

19.♘bd4 ♖e8 20.♘xh6† ♔f8 21.♕g5 ♗g6

Or 21...d5 22.♖xe4! dxe4 23.♘df5 and mate next move.



22.♖xe7! ♖xe7

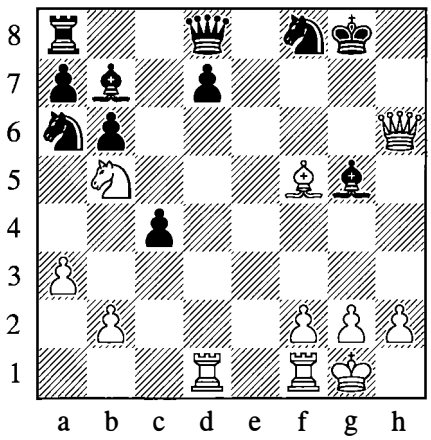
22...♔xe7 23.♘hf5† ♗xf5 24.♘xf5† ♔e6 25.♖e1† ♔d5 26.♘e7† and Black is soon mated.

23.♕xf6 ♖e4 24.♕h8† ♔e7 25.♘hf5† ♗xf5 26.♘xf5† ♔e6 27. ♕h3

And Bondarevsky concludes with "etc." Black is indeed in a bad way. If for example 27...♖e5, then 28.f4! ♖xf5 29.♖e1† ♔f6 30.♕h6#.

Thus, after 15...♘c5 White would still have had the possibility to decide the game with an attractive attack.

16.♕xh6 f5 17.♘xf5 ♖xf5! 18.♗xf5 ♘f8 19.♖ad1 ♗g5



The immediate dangers have passed. Black has two minor pieces for a rook and pawn, which is approximate material equality; but there are no pawns left in front of his castled position, and his king is completely open – an effective combinative motif. This is just what gives White the advantage.

20.♕h5 ♕f6 21.♘d6 ♗c6 22.♕g4!

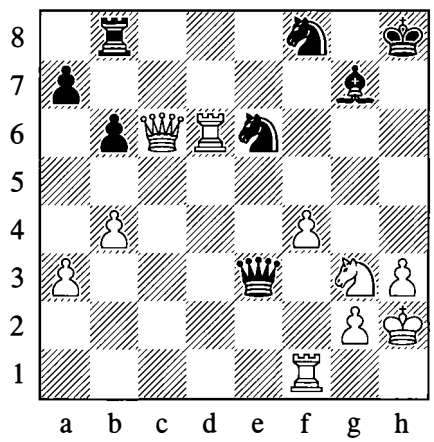
A double attack. White threatens h2-h4 (or f2-f4) as well as ♕xc4†.

22...♔h8 23.♗e4

It is only natural that White fancies speculating a little more on the bad position of the black king, especially since Black's position also contains plenty of other weaknesses.

Another possible finale to this striking game would have been the following combination: 23.♕xg5 ♕xg5 24.♘f7† ♔g7 25.♘xg5 ♔f6 26.♗c2! ♔xg5 27.♖d6 ♘e6 28.f4† ♔f6 (28...♘xf4 29.h4† ♔g4 30.♖d4 ♖f8 31.♔h2 followed by ♗d1†, winning the knight) 29.f5 ♔e7 30.♖xc6, leading to an endgame in which White would still need to show accuracy in converting his advantage into a win.

23...♗h6 24.♗xc6 dxc6 25.♕xc4 ♘c5 26.b4 ♘e6 27.♕xc6 ♖b8 28.♘e4 ♕g6 29.♖d6 ♗g7 30.f4 ♕g4 31.h3 ♕e2 32.♘g3 ♕e3† 33.♔h2



33...♘d4

After 33...♘xf4, Bronstein indicated the simple solution 34.♕c7!, followed by ♕xg7†! and ♘f5†.

34.♕d5 ♖e8 35.♘h5 ♘e2 36.♘xg7 ♕g3† 37.♔h1 ♘xf4 38.♕f3 ♘e2 39.♖h6†
1–0

The main conclusion to emerge from the material we have illustrated is that a very close interrelation exists between weak points and combinative motifs.

Chapter 18

Combinative Attack with Two Bishops – Harmonious Action of Rooks on the Second and Seventh Ranks – Rook Sacrifice on g7

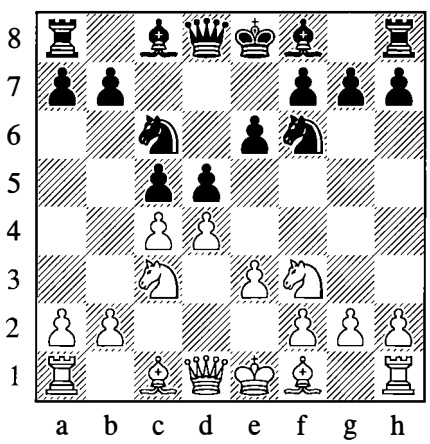
A fair amount was already said about the two bishops in Part One of this book. Until now, however, the topic was mainly broached within the context of planned manoeuvring, where under certain conditions the harmonious action of the bishop pair acquired specific power.

In a combinative attack the bishops become especially formidable if their fire is directed from the queenside along two adjacent open diagonals against the opponent's castled position. In such attacks the bishops contribute to implementing many a beautiful combinative theme. In the following superb game, the attack may be called immortal; utilizing the powerful harmonious action of his bishops, Black offered sacrifice after sacrifice to his opponent.

G. Rotlewi – A. Rubinstein

Queen's Gambit
5th Russian Championship, Lodz 1907

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3 c5 4.c4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♘f6



Rubinstein also regularly played the White side of this opening, but in this position he usually continued 6.a3, so as to meet 6...♗d6 with 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.b4 and ♗b2.

6.dxc5 ♗xc5 7.a3 a6 8.b4 ♗d6 9.♗b2 0–0 10.♕d2

White thus delays solving a fundamental problem of the opening – the problem of castling.

But then 10.♗d3 would not be good either, as after 10...dxc4 11.♗xc4 b5 12.♗d3 ♗b7 13.0–0 a completely symmetrical position would arise – but with Black to move. That would mean that White had lost a whole tempo, which in this variation is of crucial significance.

The correct solution lay in 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♗e2.

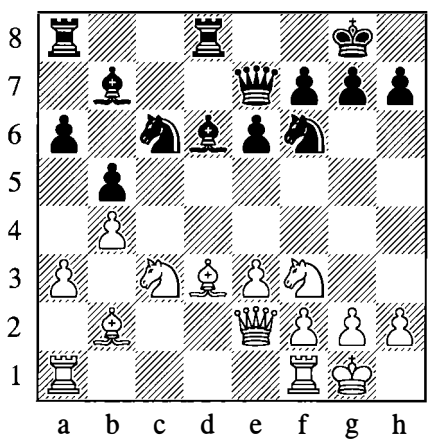
10...♕e7! 11.♗d3?

The negative side of this move was explained in the previous note. It was necessary to play 11.cxd5.

11...dxc4 12.♗xc4 b5 13.♗d3 ♖d8 14.♕e2

Another loss of tempo. White's queen has taken two moves to reach e2 from d1.

14...♗b7 15.0–0



The diagram paints a clear picture. White has wasted two clear tempos.

15...♘e5

Black exchanges off the knight on f3, which in these circumstances is essentially the chief support on which White's kingside rests. At the same time the long diagonal is opened, and both black bishops acquire the possibility of bombarding White's castled position along adjacent diagonals. Events come to a head quickly and inescapably.

16.♘xe5 ♗xe5 17.f4 ♗c7 18.e4?

The advance of the e-pawn leads to a quick catastrophe. White should station his rooks in the centre and defend patiently.

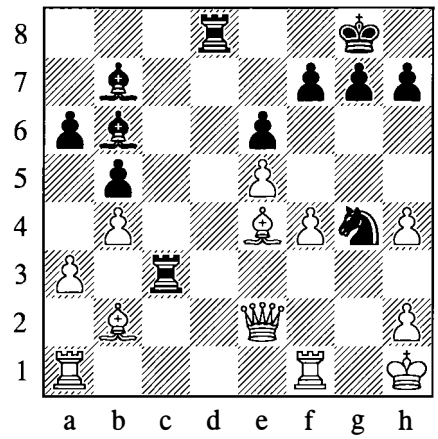
18...♖ac8 19.e5 ♗b6† 20.♔h1 ♘g4! 21.♗e4

Black's bishops seem at first sight to have been rendered harmless, but this is far from being the case.

21...♕h4 22.g3

Black would have the same answer to 22.h3.

22...♖xc3! 23.gxh4



23...♖d2!!

With the exception of the bishop on b6, all Black's pieces are en prise, and in addition White is a queen (for a knight) to the good. White is nonetheless in a bad state. The diagonal power of the black bishops has reached its zenith; their harmonious aggression cannot be resisted, and an ineluctable mate –

retribution for the two wasted tempos – hangs over the white king's head.

24.♕xd2

Or 24.♗xb7 ♖xe2 25.♗g2 ♖h3.

On 24.♗xc3, Black forces mate either with 24...♗xe4† or with the simple 24...♖xe2.

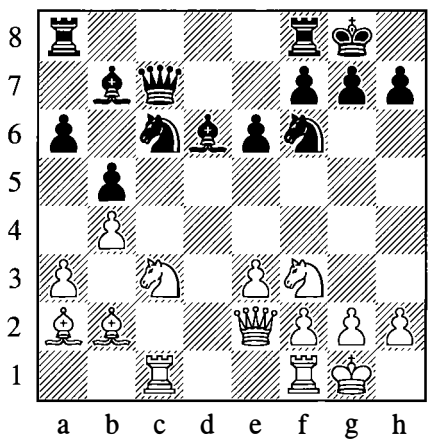
24...♗xe4† 25.♕g2 ♖h3
0–1

Roughly one year and three months earlier, the game given below had taken place. It might have served as a warning to Rotlewi if he had managed to familiarize himself with it in good time.

F. Marshall - H. Wolf

Queen's Gambit
Nuremberg 1906

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 e6 4.♘c3 c5 5.e3 ♘f6 6.♗xc4 a6 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♕c7? 9.♕e2 b5 10.♗a2 ♗b7 11.dxc5 ♗xc5 12.b4 ♗d6 13.♗b2 0–0 14.♖ac1



Both players' bishops are aiming at the enemy king position, but Black's queen is badly placed. If it were on e7, Black could take the initiative with ...♘e5.

14...♖ad8

He should have played 14...♕e7.

15.♗b1 ♗a8?

The purpose of this move is incomprehensible, although Black's position is already unsatisfactory since he cannot prevent White's knight sortie to e4.

Even so, it was not too late to put up a reasonable defence after 15...♕e7.

16.♘e4! ♘d5

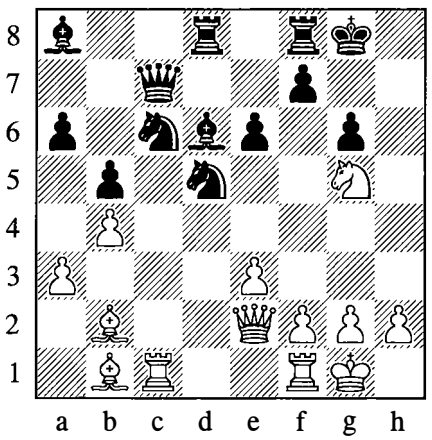
In the event of 16...♘xe4 17.♗xe4, the double attack against h7 (♗xh7†) and c6 (♗xc6 followed by ♘d4) cannot be parried.

17.♘g5 g6 18.♘xh7!

All these possibilities are made available thanks to the powerful attacking role of the bishops.

18...♔xh7 19.♘g5† ♔g8

On 19...♔h6, White plays 20.♕g4.



20.♕h5!

The decisive combinative stroke. If now 20...gxh5, the thematic mate 21.♗h7# follows.

20...f6

The only move, but even this fails to save Black.

21.♗xg6 ♖d7 22.♘xe6 ♖h7

If 22...♕c8, then the simplest way to win is 23.♘xf8 ♗xf8 24.♗f5.

23.♗xh7† ♕xh7 24.♕xh7† ♔xh7 25.♘xf8† ♗xf8 26.♖fd1 ♘e7 27.e4
1–0

In the following game, the diagonal fire of the bishops is aimed at the castled position on the queenside.

Consultation Partners – J. Blackburne

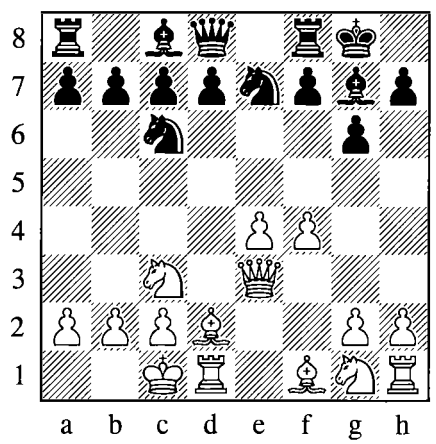
Centre Game
Hastings 1894

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.♕xd4 ♘c6 4.♕e3 g6

Seeing that in the Centre Game White usually castles long, Black prepares to develop his bishop on g7, from where it can conveniently attack the enemy king's position on the queenside. As the further course of events shows, Blackburne's calculation was to prove entirely justified.

5.♗d2 ♗g7 6.♘c3 ♘ge7 7.0–0–0 0–0 8.f4?

8.♗c4 is move advisable, impeding the ...d5-break.



8...d5! 9.exd5

There is nothing better; 9.e5 would be met by 9...d4.

9...♘b4! 10.♗c4 ♗f5

The second bishop has taken up a menacing position with regard to White's castled king.

11.♗b3 ♘exd5 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.♕f3?

The final mistake. In the event of 13.♕c5, Black's advantage would not yet be decisive.

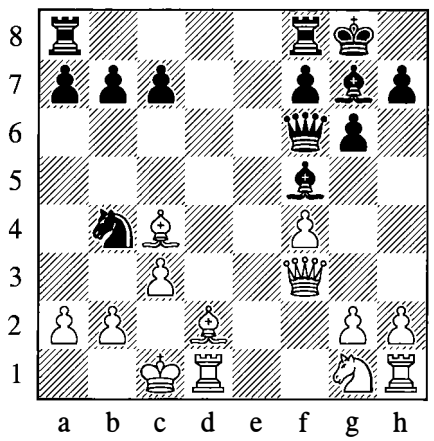
13...♕f6

The bishops have deployed themselves as a striking force.

14.c3 ♘b4

With the decisive threat of ...♘d3†. White can defend against this check only by moving his bishop to c4 – which he does.

15.♗c4



15...♕a6!!

This spectacular combinative move is also the strongest, although 15...b5 is another way to win.

16.g4

Black has a queen, knight and bishop en prise, but the plight of the white king, subjected to the diagonal action of the bishops, means

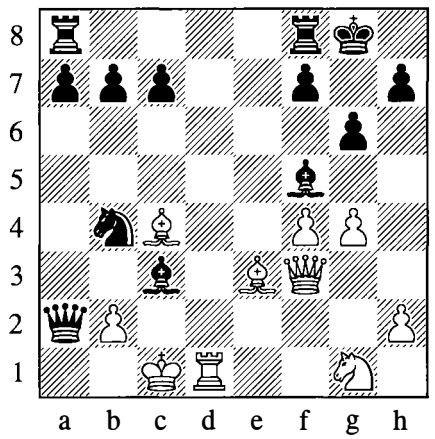
that White's position is tactically hopeless. Black finds a striking combinative solution that destroys his opponent instantly.

16...♕xa2

16...♕a4 would also lead to a quick mate.

17.♗e3 ♗xc3!

The final position, just like the whole attack, is uncommonly pretty. The finish deserves a diagram.



White cannot avoid being mated.

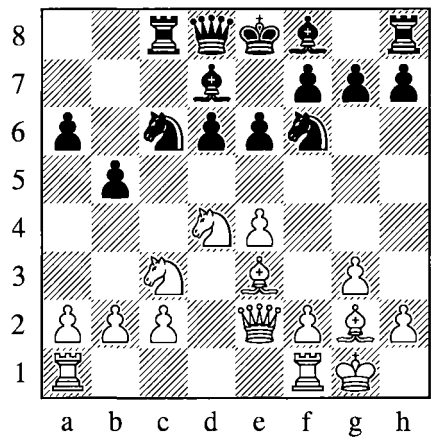
0–1

In all three of the above games, the bishops taking part in the combination were operating harmoniously on two adjacent diagonals. In the example below, the range of the bishops' activity will be far greater than two diagonals only. They will operate on adjacent diagonals, on parallel lines and on intersecting lines... but let us proceed to the game.

G. Ravinsky – V. Panov

Sicilian Defence
Moscow 1943

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.g3 ♘c6 7.♗g2 ♗d7 8.0–0 a6 9.♗e3 ♖c8 10.♕e2 b5



Black is putting off his kingside mobilization for too long. An uncastled king is, after all, a serious target for combinations. Suffice it to recall the Steinitz – Von Bardeleben game (see Chapter 15), as well as several others.

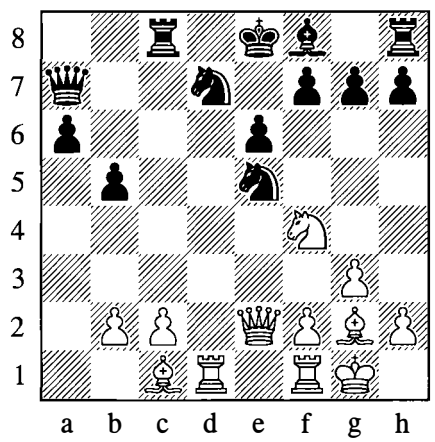
11.a3 ♘e5 12.♖ad1 ♘c4 13.♗c1 ♘xa3

Black decides to take the pawn. It was still possible to play 13...♗e7.

14.e5 dxe5 15.♘c6 ♕c7 16.♘xe5 ♘c4 17.♘xd7 ♘xd7 18.♘d5 ♕a7 19.♘f4

With the unambiguous intention of sacrificing on e6.

19...♘ce5



20.♖xd7!

The theme of this attractive and unexpected combination is the total exposure of Black's king and the freeing of space in which to attack it with the two bishops. Six moves later White will execute another combination on this same theme, by sacrificing a second exchange.

20...♘xd7 21.♘xe6!

The logical continuation of the combination, which serves as an instructive punishment for Black's neglect of castling. The black king is now condemned to suffer cruelly until death.

21...fxe6 22.♕xe6† ♗e7

On 22...♔d8, Black is mated as follows: 23.♗g5† ♔c7 24.♕c6† ♔b8 25.♗f4† ♖c7 26.♗xc7† ♕xc7 27.♕a8#

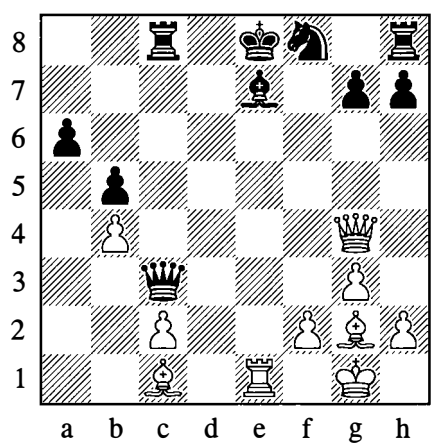
23.♖fe1 ♕c5

On 23...♘b6, White continues: 24.♗g5 ♖c7 25.♗c6† ♔f8 (25...♔d8 26.♖d1† ♘d7 27.♗e3 and wins) 26.♖e3 and Black has no defence against a rook check on the f-file; White answers 26...♖xc6 with 27.♗xe7† followed by ♕xc6†.

24.b4

Endeavouring to divert the black queen from the g5-square, which is where White's bishop aims to go.

24...♘f8! 25.♕g4 ♕c3



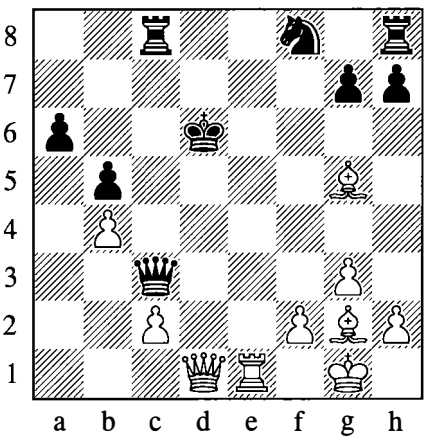
26.♖xe7†!

After this, the white bishops fully come into their own.

26...♔xe7 27.♗g5† ♔d6

There is no improvement in 27...♔e8, which is met by 28.♕e2† ♔f7 29.♗d5† ♔g6 30.♕e4† ♔xg5 31.♕f4† ♔h5 32.♗f7† and 33.♕h4#.

28.♕d1†



By this beautiful return of the queen to its initial abode, White acquires broad scope for constructing thematic, problem-like mating positions with the active participation of the bishops.

28...♔c7

After 28...♔e6 or 28...♔e5, Black incurs a "pure" mate in the spirit of a Bohemian chess problem: 29.♕d5#

29.♗f4† ♔b6 30.♕d6† ♔a7 31.♕e7†

And Black cannot evade a quick mate, for instance: 31...♖c7 32.♗e3† ♔b8 33.♕d8† ♖c8 34.♕b6#

1–0

The reader will no doubt have given attention to the way the harmonious action of the pieces assisted the unfolding of the combinative

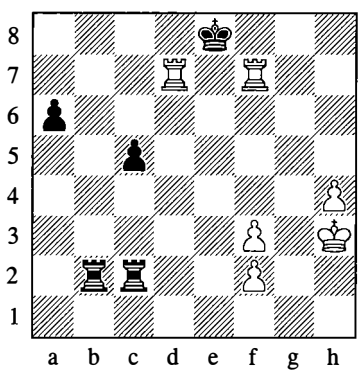
events. We may say that a combination is the result of the increasing harmony in the operations of the chess forces. We recall the game Adams – Torre (see Chapter 14), in which the harmonious action of the rooks on the e-file led to the creation of an astounding combinative masterpiece. Not only that example but several others too have shown us how the rooks can fulminate, bursting in along a file and pursuing the enemy king that flees in panic.

We would now like to consider one other form of harmonious rook activity – on the seventh rank for White, or the second for Black.

The action of the rooks on the seventh (second) rank usually entails numerous threats which are sometimes irresistible, and may in itself constitute the point or theme of a combination. At the same time it can, and regularly does, form a motif that leads on to new combinations. This type of concerted invasion by the rooks stirs up a whole vortex of combinative ideas all around it.

So the action of the rooks in cooperation on the seventh (second) rank might be said to embrace all the elements of combination. This is a source of might with which the opponent cannot usually cope.

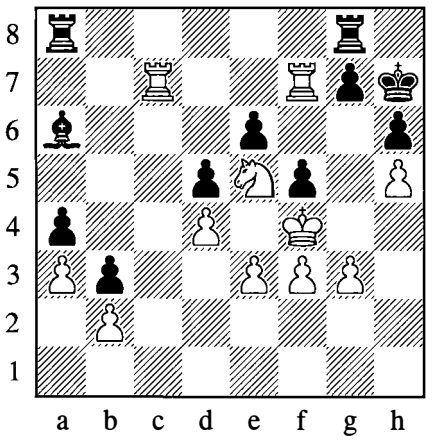
Let us look at a small schematic pattern.



White forces mate with 1.♖de7† ♔d8 2.♖a7 ♔e8 3.♖h7, after which there is no defence against ♖h8#.

A. Alekhine – F. Yates

London 1922



Not only White's rooks – on the seventh rank – but all his pieces, including the king, are acting harmoniously. Such consummate harmony ought to bring the struggle to a combinative crisis.

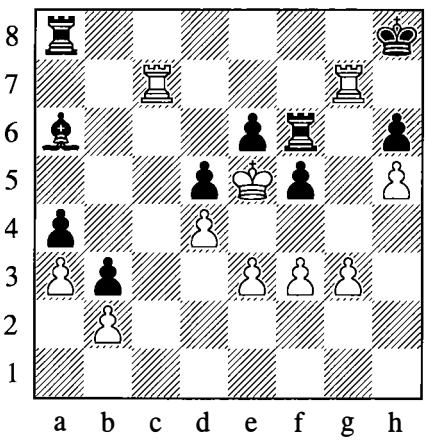
35.♘d7 ♔h8 36.♘f6! ♖gf8 37.♖xg7!!

Here is the point of the combination White has undertaken. He could now have announced mate in at most seven moves.

37...♖xf6

There is nothing else!

38.♔e5



Now on 38...♖af8 or 38...♖ff8, White mates in two moves with 39.♖h7† ♔g8 40.♖cg7# This mate is indeed the theme of the combination begun with White's 35th move.

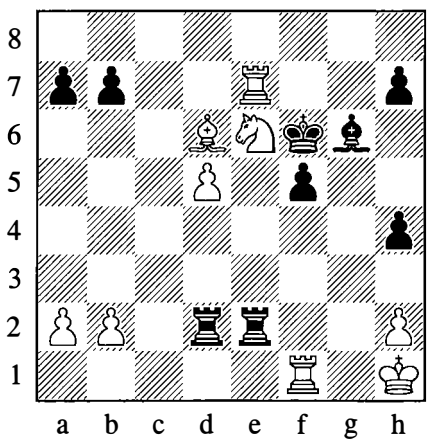
White therefore picks up the rook on f6 unhindered. On 38...♗d3 or 38...f4, mate follows in four moves: 39.♖h7†! ♔g8 40.♖cg7† ♔f8 41.♔xf6 and 42.♖h8#.

1–0

The dramatic conclusion to the second match between Steinitz and Chigorin, as is well known, was brought about by Chigorin unexpectedly overlooking a mate with rooks on the second rank.

M. Chigorin – W. Steinitz

World Championship (23), Havana 1892



White is a piece up (an extra knight for a pawn), but the black rooks on the second rank are very dangerous. Black threatens a combination with ...♗g6-h5-f3†, and also ...h3 followed by ...♖f2.

The correct continuation for White, as indicated by Chigorin, is 32.♖xb7, though in playing it he would need to calculate quite a few replies. But it turns out that he can refute all Black's tries, thus 32...♖xd5 33.♘f4, or 32...♖xe6 33.dxe6 ♖xd6 34.e7, or 32...h3 33.♗g3, or 32...♗h5 33.♖b3, or 32...♗f7 33.♘f4.

In actual fact, there followed:

32.♗b4? ♖xh2†

And White resigned in view of 33...♖dg2#.

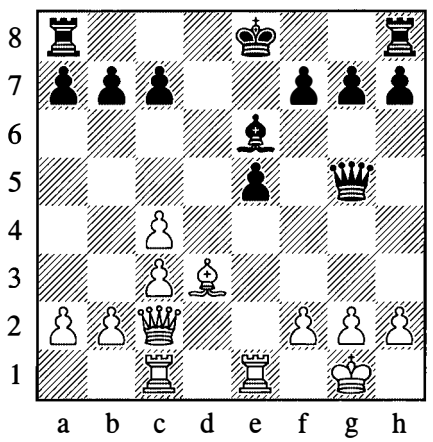
0–1

The actual process by which the rooks penetrate to their aggressive position is depicted for us in the games that follow.

G. Maroczy – F. Marshall

Petroff Defence
San Sebastian 1911

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘e4 5.c4 ♗e7 6.♘c3 ♘c3 7.dxc3 ♘c6 8.♗d3 ♘e5 9.♘xe5 dxe5 10.♕c2 ♗g5 11.0–0 ♗e6 12.♖e1 ♗xc1 13.♖axc1 ♕g5



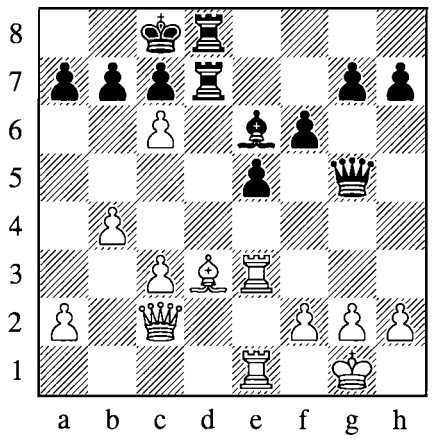
The game proceeds in a very peaceful manner. Some strict judges of the positional niceties would prefer Black's game here, on the grounds of the pawn structure – seeing that White's queenside pawns have not preserved the chain formation that characterizes Black's pawns on the kingside. Some other positional considerations might also be adduced, but

they carry little real weight. Great events can hardly be expected in these circumstances – yet a combinative storm was suddenly to descend on White's position, and all at once he was to find himself on the brink of defeat.

14.♖e3 0–0–0 15.♖ce1 f6 16.b4

Maroczy's conduct of the game is uninspired. This last move cannot even count as a hint at an attack. Why not play 16.♕a4 ♔b8 17.♗e4 to liven the game up?

16...♖d7! 17.c5 ♖hd8 18.c6



This already is *something*, but Black has prepared himself for this thrust at the same time as organizing pressure along the d-file. The atmosphere grows heavier; move by move, combinative motifs are appearing.

18...♖d6!

Of course not 18...bxc6 19.♕a4! ♖xd3 20.♕a6†.

19.cxb7†

Black would answer 19.♕a4 with 19...♔b8, and White's attack is at a dead end.

19...♔b8

The question now is whether Black will be able to extract something from the d-file.

20.a4

Better 20.c4, which prevents the black bishop occupying the long diagonal.

20...♗d5 21.♖g3 ♕f4 22.♗xh7

White attempts to reach f5 with his queen, after picking up a pawn into the bargain. Now, however, Black breaks through on the d-file, and the struggle at once enters a phase of tactical high tension.

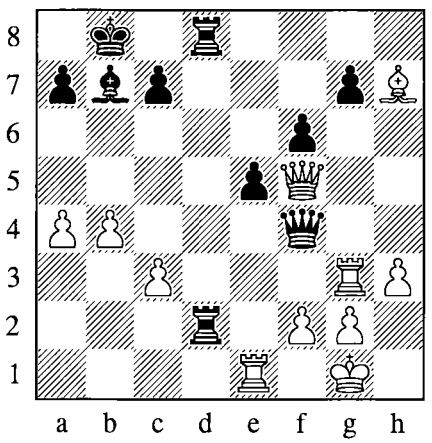
22...♗xb7 23.h3?!

Avoiding threats of mate on the back rank.

If for example 23.♕f5? at once, there follows 23...♖d1 24.♖e3 (or 24.♔f1 ♖xe1† and wins) 24...♕xe3! 25.fxe3 ♖xe1† 26.♔f2 ♖c1, and White's position becomes critical.

However, White would do better to abandon the idea of going to f5 with his queen and play 23.♕e2 ♖d2 24.♕e3, when the situation remains complex.

23...♖d2 24.♕f5



24...♕xg3!?

The time for combination is now ripe, and Black cannot resist this opportunity.

After 24...♖d1 (which looks encouraging),

he would be at risk of losing the game. There could follow 25.♖xd1 ♖xd1† 26.♔h2 ♕c1 27.♖xg7 etc.

[Editor's note: The "slow" 24...g5!! is extremely strong. Black then threatens 25...♖d1 26.♖xd1 ♖xd1† 27.♔h2 ♕c1, and after 25.♕xf4 exf4 26.♖g4 ♗c8 Black wins the exchange.]

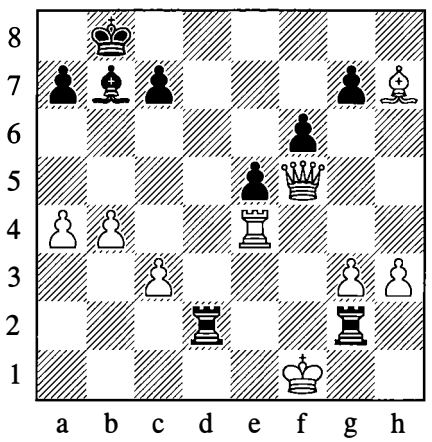
25.fxg3 ♖xg2† 26.♔f1 ♖dd2

The harmonious action of the rooks on the 2nd rank is the theme of Black's combination. He threatens to decide the game in his favour immediately by 27...♖h2.

How is White to defend? If he tries 27.♖c1 ♖h2 28.♔e1, there follows 28...♖de2† 29.♔d1 (29.♔f1 ♖eg2) 29...♖eg2 (or 29...♖ef2) 30.♕f1 ♗f3† 31.♔e1 ♖e2† 32.♕xe2 ♖xe2† 33.♔f1 ♖h2, and Black should win.

The queen cannot leave f5 on account of mate on f2. Nevertheless White finds a drawing chance.

27.♖e4!



27...♗xe4

A tempting move was 27...♖h2, whereupon 28.♔g1 would lose to 28...♖dg2† 29.♔f1 ♖b2 30.♔g1 ♗xe4 31.♕xe4 ♖he2.

White has, however, a unique but adequate rejoinder: 28.♕f3, and if 28...♖b2, then 29.♔g1 ♖hc2 30.♕f1 (but not 30.♕d1 ♖g2†, when Black regains the queen and remains with the better endgame), and Black could even lose.

28.♕xe4 ♖df2† 29.♔e1 ♖a2 30.♔f1 ♖af2† 31.♔e1 ♖a2 32.♔f1 ♖gf2† 33.♔g1!

The white king has to manoeuvre accurately under the storm unleashed by the black rooks. A mistake would be 33.♔e1 ♖fb2, after which White would have to give up his queen for a rook to defend against mate.

33...♖fe2

Now 33...♖fb2 is parried by 34.♕e1.

34.♕b1 ♖g2† 35.♔h1

The only way! Instead 35.♔f1 loses to 35...♖af2† 36.♔e1 ♖b2.

35...♖h2† 36.♔g1 ♖ag2† 37.♔f1 ♖b2 38.♕e4
½–½

An interesting and instructive example of the energy latent in the concerted horizontal action of the rooks. Right until the end you are reluctant to believe that the raging rooks cannot achieve more. When Marshall sacrificed his queen he was undoubtedly counting on winning the game, but it was impossible to foresee everything. We will only add that in annotating this game, the then World Champion Emanuel Lasker indicated that Black could have won by continuing 27...♖h2 (instead of 27...♗xe4, as played by Marshall). He left the reply 28.♕f3 out of account, examining in detail only 28.♔g1.

Let us look at another game, in which the black rooks on the second rank achieved their end. This time the rooks belonged to the reigning World Champion – José Raoul Capablanca.

A. Nimzowitsch – J. R. Capablanca

Queen's Gambit
New York 1927

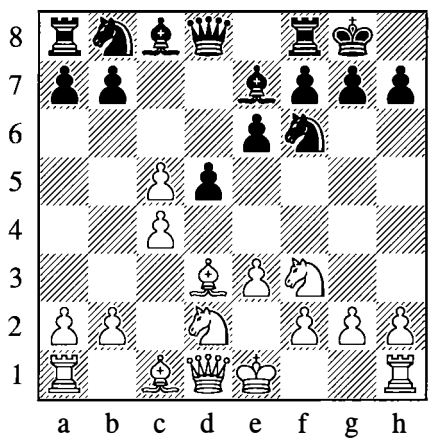
1.c4

Formally, according to the opening catechism, the start of this game ought to be called an English Opening, but the name we have actually given it is determined by the position after move 3.

1...♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 d5 4.e3 ♗e7 5.♘bd2 0–0 6.♗d3 c5 7.dxc5

In making this exchange, White wishes on principle to force Black to lose a tempo, for after 7...♗xc5 the bishop will have reached c5 in two moves, not one. In actual fact, after 7.dxc5 it is White who loses a tempo, not Black.

If Nimzowitsch had foreseen his opponent's reply, he would most likely have played 7.0–0. Against 7...cxd4, neither 8.♘xd4 e5 9.♘f5 nor 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♘xc4 would have had bad consequences for White.



7...♘a6! 8.0–0

Completely conceding the initiative. The balance could have been maintained by 8.♘b3.

8...♘xc5 9.♗e2

Just who has lost a tempo is now clear!

9...b6 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘b3 ♗b7 12.♘xc5 ♗xc5 13.♕a4 ♕f6 14.♗a6 ♗xa6 15.♕xa6 ♘b4 16.♕e2 ♖fd8

Finally one rook has bestirred itself, and after two more moves the other one will also set off. Afterwards, one after the other, they will penetrate to d2 and c2.

17.a3 ♘d3 18.♘e1

With astonishing persistence Nimzowitsch strives to exchange off the minor pieces, but here these tactics do not pay; after each exchange it is Black's position, not White's, that improves.

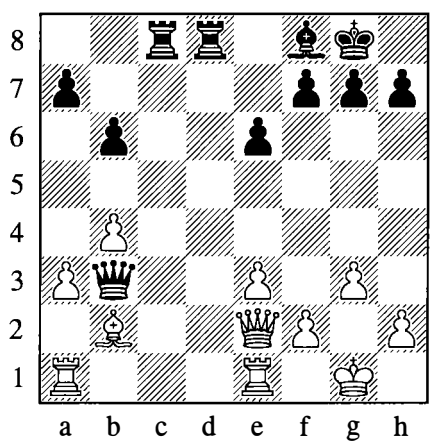
18...♘xe1 19.♖xe1 ♖ac8 20.♖b1 ♕e5 21.g3 ♕d5 22.b4 ♗f8 23.♗b2

It looks as if White has finally freed himself from his bonds, but Black's queen manoeuvre ...♕f6-e5-d5 had a specific intention which is revealed with his next move.

23...♕a2

Bravely leading the attack at the head of Black's forces, the queen on a2 is in a menacing position, tying the white pieces down; at the same time, a queenside offensive with ...a5 is being prepared.

24.♖a1 ♕b3



25.♗d4

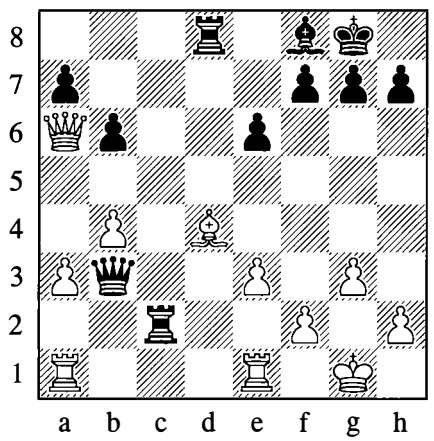
The big question is whether White is generally in a position to cope with his difficulties, which have a history that takes us right back to the opening of the game.

25.♖ac1? does not solve White's problems, in view of 25...a5, and White is in trouble with the a3-pawn.

25.♖ad1 is a reasonable alternative; there could follow 25...a5 26.♗d4!, and if 26...♕xa3 then 27.bxa5 and 28.♖a1, winning the pawn back.

25...♖c2 26.♕a6?

This attempt at activity is misguided. Instead 26.♕d1!, with the idea of 27.♖e2, would have enabled White to neutralize his opponent's initiative.



26...e5!

A small combination which has the aim of penetrating to the second rank with Black's other rook – after which the tactical atmosphere greatly heats up.

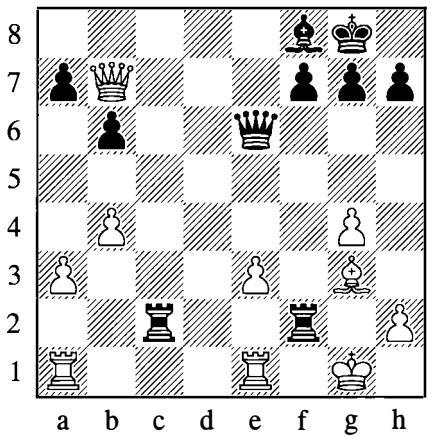
27.♗xe5 ♖d2 28.♕b7?

The f2-pawn is not easy to defend.

Thus, 28.♖f1? would provoke the combination 28...♕xe3! 29.♗f4 ♖xf2, with the familiar mating theme that arose in Chigorin – Steinitz (see earlier in this chapter).

On the other hand 28.♕f1 would reduce White's position to a totally passive state. This was, however, the only defence that would still leave him with chances of resisting.

28...♖xf2 29.g4 ♕e6 30.♗g3



30...♖xh2!

The crisis, which could have been expected from one move to the next, one minute to the next. White's king position collapses, and soon it will only remain for Black to exploit some technical resources in order to win.

31.♕f3

A sad necessity, as 31.♗xh2 ♕xg4† 32.♔h1 ♕h3 forces mate.

31...♖hg2† 32.♕xg2

White is mated otherwise: 32.♔h1 ♕h6† or 32.♔f1 ♕c4†.

32...♖xg2†

The open position of White's king continues to be a genuine combinative motif, and this makes it impossible for him to organize a successful defence.

33.♔xg2 ♕xg4 34.♖ad1 h5 35.♖d4 ♕g5 36.♔h2 a5 37.♖e2 axb4 38.axb4 ♗e7 39.♖de4 ♗f6 40.♖f2 ♕d5 41.♖e8† ♔h7

White resigned, although he might still have resisted for a while.

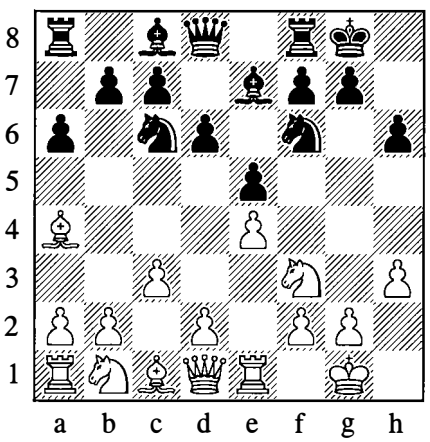
0–1

With the following game on the grand scale, we aim to complete our discussion of the harmonious cooperation of the rooks. In this case, however, we are dealing not with a concerted horizontal action but rather with a combinative attack by rooks along the file.

O. Duras – R. Teichmann

Ruy Lopez
Ostend 1906

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0–0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 d6 7.c3 0–0 8.h3 h6



If White's 8th move was to some extent understandable as a measure to prevent the pin of his knight and thus ensure the central advance d2-d4 under the best circumstances, Black's analogous move with his h-pawn may arouse sheer perplexity. After all, such pawn moves invariably lead to a weakening of the king's position, and therefore ought not to be made without extreme necessity.

All this is true, but the point is that Teichmann's move is in a measure effective as a link in an overall plan. Black envisages transferring his bishop from e7 to g7, where it will be a good deal more actively placed and will in any event improve Black's position in the centre. To carry out this regrouping, the moves ...♖e8, ...♗f8, ...g6 and ...♗g7 are planned. But immediately after ...♗f8, White could pin the knight with ♗g5. The purpose of Black's precautionary move is to deny White this possibility. Of course there are also other plans at Black's disposal, but whether they are better or worse than the "Teichmann plan" is impossible to say on the sole basis of abstract discussion.

9.d4 ♗d7

Indirectly defending the e5-pawn, as after 10.♗xc6 ♗xc6 White's pawn on e4 is en prise.

10.♘bd2 ♖e8 11.♘f1 ♗f8 12.♘g3 g6

Now the white knights are confronted with a "palisade" of pawns. Black's pieces are excellently developed, occupying good active posts. The position contains the potential for Black to seize the initiative.

13.♗b3 ♕e7 14.♗e3 ♗g7

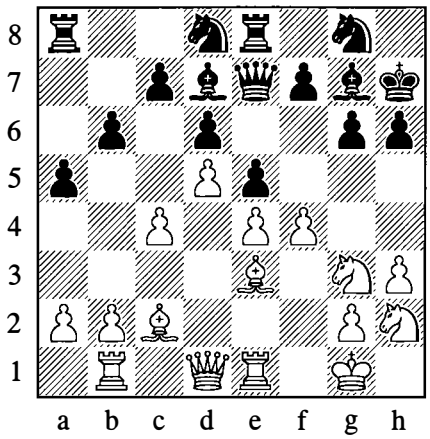
Black loses his knight if he goes after the pawn: 14...exd4? 15.cxd4 ♘xe4? 16.♗c1

15.d5

The crucial closure of the centre in similar cases was much discussed in Part One of this book. Here we can only say that if White has decided on this step, he is executing it in good time, immediately nullifying all Black's play in the e-file and on the a1-h8 diagonal.

The struggle will now be transferred to the flanks, and in order to prepare it, both players will obviously have to resort to new manoeuvres with their pieces.

15...♘d8 16.c4 b6 17.♗c2 a5 18.♘h2 ♔h7 19.♖b1 ♘g8 20.f4



This thrust, however, is a double-edged weapon. Black's cramped pieces come to life, and from White's point of view some very palpable weaknesses are formed in the centre – for instance the e4-pawn, and the squares e5 and c5 which may become excellent stations for Black's pieces. What will White acquire in return? The f-file and, it might seem, nothing else.

Despite this, the matter does not look so simple. White's pawn configuration is such that his rooks have plenty of space at their disposal for manoeuvring and organizing concerted actions. The situation of Black's rooks, for the moment, is worse. Even if his queen's rook emerges from the corner, the territory for its actions – not to mention any concerted undertakings with its kingside counterpart – is fairly restricted. The harmonious operation of the rooks which White can easily achieve is the main trump in his hands. The question is only how effective this trump will be. From this moment the struggle quickly becomes sharper, which means it is sure to enter a phase of combinative tension with possibilities for both sides.

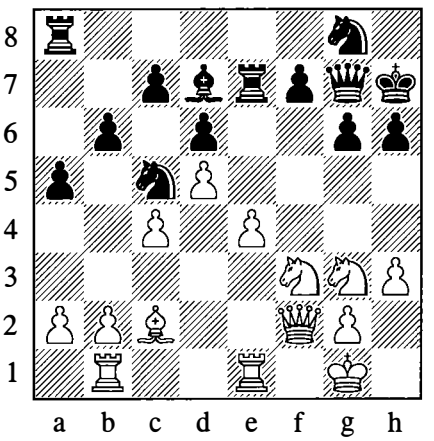
20...exf4! 21.♗xf4 ♗e5!

After long deliberation, Black came to the conclusion that this move which blocks the e4-pawn was wholly indispensable. White was threatening, after ♘f3, to carry out e4-e5. And ...f6 was no good, in view of the catastrophic weakening of g6.

22.♗xe5 ♕xe5 23.♘gf1 ♕g7 24.♘f3 ♘b7

If Black succeeded in establishing a knight on e5, his game would even deserve preference, but there are no ways of achieving this. Of course on c5 a knight will also be excellently placed, but then the knight's position is not the only thing at issue. Black's main problem is that of his rooks. The character of the coming struggle will largely depend on how he solves this problem.

25.♘g3 ♘c5 26.♕d2 ♖e7 27.♕f2



White exerts covert pressure against f7 and threatens a fine combination: 28.e5! dxe5 29.♘h5 ♕h8 30 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 31.♘g5† hxg5 32.♕xf7† ♔h6 33.♕xg6#

27...♖ae8

Black averts the combination. After 28.e5 dxe5 29.♘h5, he can withdraw his queen to f8.

28.♖e2 ♔h8 29.b3 ♘f6 30.♖be1 ♘h7

31.♗b1

White was probably feeling short of time, as the purpose of this move is impossible to make out. It could have been useful to continue 31.♔h2.

31...♘g5 32.♘xg5 hxg5 33.♕f3

Probably aimed at preventing ...g4. The consequence of White's 31st move is that he has lost the initiative and has to defend.

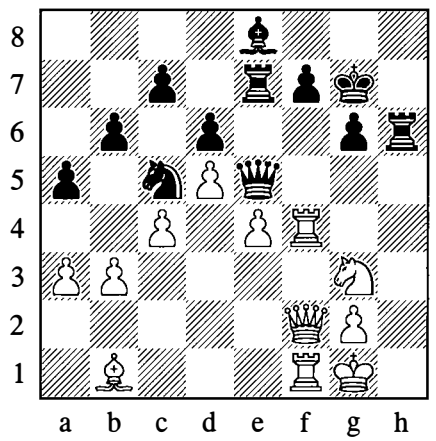
33...♕d4† 34.♔h2 ♔g7 35.♖f2 ♕e5 36.♖ef1 ♖h8 37.♔g1 ♖h4

Threatening 38...g4.

38.♕e3! ♖h6

Now 38...g4 could be met by 39.♘f5† ♗xf5 40.♖xf5 gxf5 41.♕g5†, or the even simpler 39.♖f4.

39.a3 g4 40.hxg4 ♗xg4 41.♖f4 ♗d7 42.♕f2 ♗e8



43.♖f5!?

A violent but risky combinative attack begins. However, what other could be recommended to White?

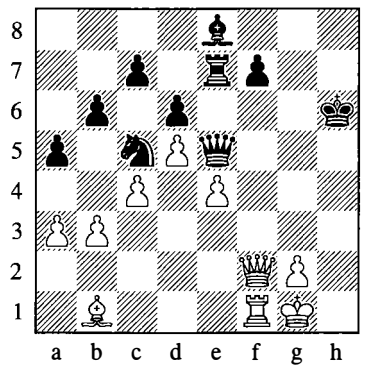
With 43.b4 he would merely be weakening his own queenside still further.

He could admittedly have played in a passive, defensive spirit with 43.♗c2, but after 43...♕b2 he would have felt ill at ease, even if only from the psychological viewpoint. From this it follows that the diagram position is unsatisfactory for White, and plunging into the sea of tactical complexities was probably his best psychological solution.

Black now has little choice; he must either take the rook or move his queen away to c3. Placing it on a1, under potential attack from the white rook, would hardly be reasonable.

43...♕c3?

What was it that made Black reject 43...gxf5 here? Most likely, he took his opponent's calculations on trust or was in principle sceptical about the possibility of defending the exposed king. And yet he ought to have taken the rook and thereby cut the Gordian knot of the position. This is attested by the following analysis: 44.♘xf5† ♔h7 45.♘xh6 ♔xh6



46.♕h4† ♔g7 47.♖f3 f6! (a move indicated by Emanuel Lasker), and fending off the danger, Black remains with an extra piece.

If, in this variation, White plays 46.♕d2† (which was given as the winning move in the first edition of this book), there follows 46...♔g7! (not 46...♔h7?, which is what the first edition examined) 47.♖f5 ♕a1, and Black successfully defends. For example on 48.♖h5,

he simply plays 48...♘xe4 49. ♕h6† ♔g8, and again he has everything in order.

It is noteworthy that Duras's calculations were to pay off. He now obtains a real chance to demonstrate the overwhelming combinative power of rooks acting in harmony.

44.e5!

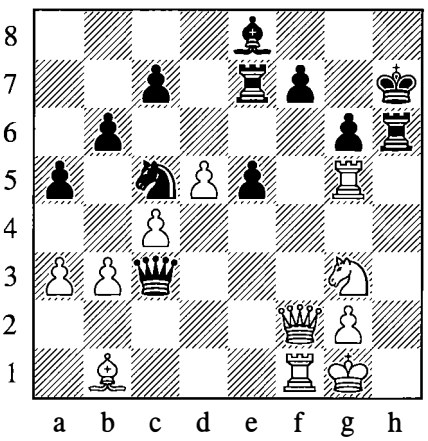
It is amazing that Teichmann should have submitted to this obvious continuation of the attack, which brings White's hitherto idle bishop into the fray and cuts Black's queen off from the kingside where he faces a powerful assault. The capture of the rook is now simply no longer playable.

44...dxe5

Black could also consider 44...♘xb3; after 45.♖f3 ♕xc4 46.♖xb3! ♖xe5!, he obtains three pawns for the piece in a position with mutual chances.

45.♖g5 ♔h7

A safer move is 45...♔f8; Black gives up the g6-pawn but achieves the exchange of queens with ...♕d4.



46.♘f5?!

One combinative blow is followed by another, although it turns out that this allows Black a saving resource.

Objectively best is the simple 46.♕f6, for example 46...♕e3† 47.♖f2 ♕c1† 48.♘f1 ♖d7 49.♖xe5 and Black's position falls apart.

46...gxf5

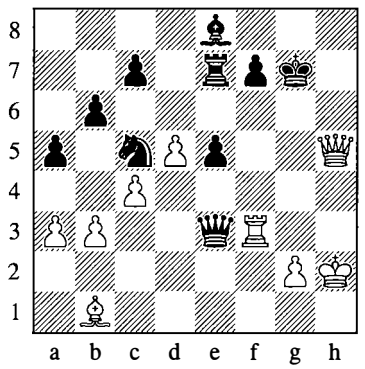
The sacrifice obviously has to be accepted. How quickly and unexpectedly the scene changes in a tactical fight! Only a few moves ago, the white bishop could have been dubbed a "living corpse", but now this same bishop is virtually filling the chief role in Duras's combinative play.

47.♕xf5† ♖g6?

The decisive mistake.

After 47...♔h8, White's attack falls just short of winning:

a) 48.♖h5 ♕e3† 49.♔h2 ♔g7 50.♖f3 ♖xh5† 51.♕xh5

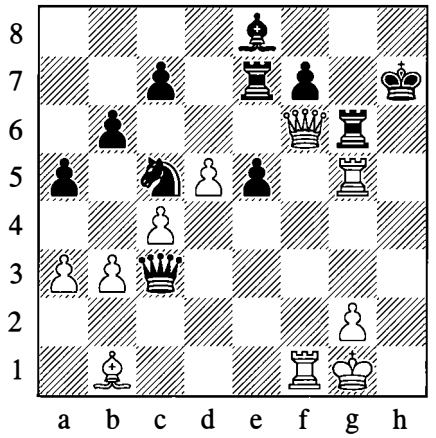


51...f5! 52.♕h3 ♕h6 53.♖g3† ♗g6 54.♗xf5 ♕xh3† 55.gxh3 ♔f6! 56.♗xg6 e4, and in the endgame it is White who must be careful.

b) 48.♖g8† ♔xg8 49.♕g5† ♖g6 50.♗xg6 fxg6 51.♕xe7 ♕e3† 52.♔h2 ♕h6†, and the game ends in perpetual check.

48.♕f6!

White threatens mate in two moves, as well as 49.♗xg6† and 49.♕xe7. This tripple threat is one of the themes of the combination that began with move 46. Black finds the only way to save himself from instant doom.



48...♕d4† 49.♖f2 ♕d1† 50.♔h2 e4 51.♕xe7?!

A much simpler way to win is 51.♖xg6, and only then ♕xe7.

51...♖h6† 52.♔g3 ♕e1 53.♕xe8 ♕e3† 54.♔g4

Not only Black's king, but White's too has ceased to feel comfortable. There are factors that enable Black to think about combinations.

Against 54...♖h4†, the sole adequate rejoinder is 55.♔xh4 ♕xf2† 56.♔h5 ♕e2† 57.♖g4, but not 57.g4 ♕h2#.

Black finds a different combination, which allows him to continue his resistance for a while longer.

54...f5†! 55.♖xf5!

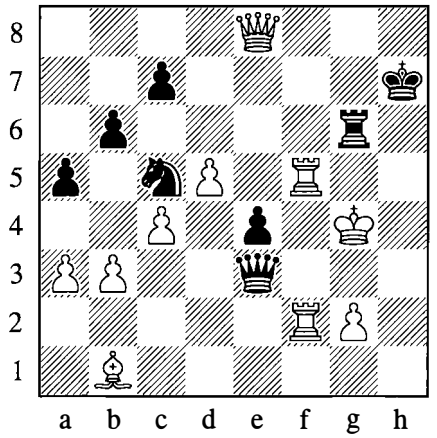
On 55.♔xf5, Black gives mate in two moves.

After 55.♖fxf5, he draws by perpetual check: 55...♕e2† 56.♔f4 ♕f2† 57.♔e5 ♕b2†

But now, Black has been given the interesting possibility of a check on g6.

55...♖g6†

Wherever White moves his king, he will be mated. But a new combination comes to the rescue.



56.♕xg6†!

A very pretty concluding combination that leads to mate. In the process, the harmonious action of White's rooks on the f-file will even surpass, in its power and effect, the analogous cases of rooks cooperating on the seventh rank. Notwithstanding its total clarity, the finale is original and colourful.

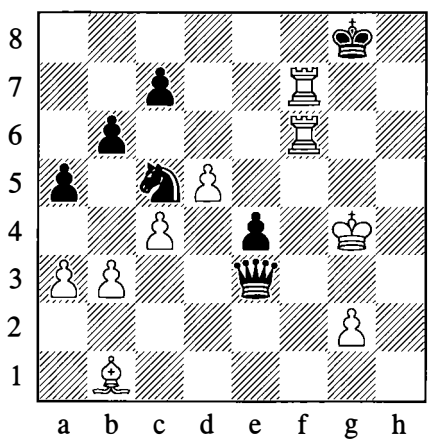
56...♔xg6 57.♖f6† ♔g7 58.♖f7† ♔g8

If 58...♔g6, then 59.♖2f6#. This is theme number one.

59.♖f8† ♔g7 60.♖2f7†

A hurricane!

60...♔g6 61.♖f6† ♔g7 62.♖8f7† ♔g8



63.♔h5

Now the threat is 64.♖f8† and 65.♖6f7# – the second, echoing theme.

63...♕e2† 64.g4

Black resigned, for even the sacrifice of his queen would postpone the mate by only a few moves.

1–0

This long game raises some important questions from the purely creative angle, and therefore seems to us to be in need of a postscript. Let us recall how the struggle took its course. The first important moment, after an opening played on theoretical lines, was on the 15th move when White decided to close the centre with d4-d5. As a result of this crucial advance, the game entered a manoeuvring phase in which White had some territorial advantage, and the Black position was accordingly somewhat cramped.

A very serious, critical event occurred – again on White's initiative – at move 20, when after very brief preparation he carried out 20.f4, obviously seeking ways to attack. However, after 20...exf4!, Black had all windows and doors opened before him. The long a1-h8 diagonal and the central e-file came back into play.

Obtaining a base for his pieces on e5, Black held up the white e4-pawn and shut the bishop on c2 out of the action. Afterwards he established a knight on the weak c5-square, and the scales gradually started tipping his way. So White's 20th move did not prove especially successful. But we cannot just say that and no more. What were the thoughts and feelings weighing on the young Duras (he was 24 years old at the time) when he pondered the move f2-f4 and then decided to play it all the same? It is most important to make at least some attempt to answer this question.

The period when Duras's combinative achievements flourished and reached their culmination was 1908-12, after which he began to withdraw from practical chess. But in the initial period of his career (1904-7) Duras's play is already marked by impressive combinative thought, together with a decidedly average understanding of positional principles. He was, as they say, not keen on positional play, while in every tournament his wins were distinguished by fine, elegant combinations. In a word, Duras gained the reputation of an extreme exponent of the "combinative" style. In our very first chapter we not only said that this had become an outworn concept in our own day; we also pointed to its artificiality even when applied to the age of Anderssen and the Italian chess school. And yet there is nothing wrong or artificial in calling Duras or anyone else a combinative player. That is what we can call anyone who strives to bring about combinative tension in the position as quickly and in as forcing a manner as possible. Such a player will often play riskily and will also sometimes violate or sidestep the most elementary principles of positional chess.

Returning to the move 20.f4, we may say that what Duras was expressing in this way was not so much a style of some kind, as rather his individual creative "ego". He did not like – we might almost say, he could not stand – lengthy processes of manoeuvring, and he would endeavour to open up the position as soon as possible. The question then is why he closed it, with his own move 15.d5. We can have no doubt that in making this move, Duras was already envisaging a plan with f2-f4.

Well, Duras achieved his purpose and the tactical tension in the position started mounting. Teichmann at the same time was playing splendidly. After the knight exchange (resulting from the manoeuvre ...♘f6-h7-g5) and the firm conquest of e5, Black's pieces took up a dominating position on the board. Duras "formed up" on the f-file, but the f7-point, securely defended by 42...♗e8, proved

invulnerable, and White landed in a peculiar dead-end position in which he had numerous weaknesses and his king was no longer especially safe. It was then that 43.♖f5!? occurred. This was the sole and natural means of justifying the move 20.f4 and all the hopes and aspirations (very great ones!) that had rested on it. For that reason this sacrifice ought not to be condemned, even though it should have led to a loss for White if Black had made the right reply. Working out all the consequences of the sacrifice over-the-board, with limited thinking time, was impossible.

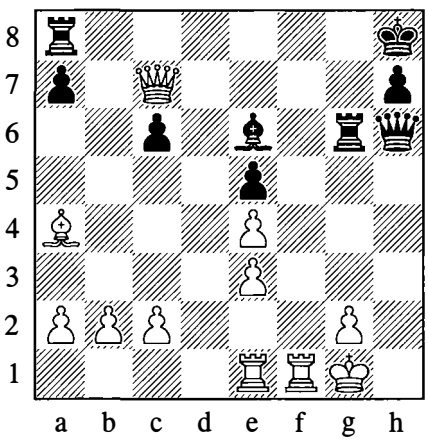
On the other hand, if White had refrained from the sacrifice, he would have been left with no prospects for the future and nothing but weaknesses in his own camp... and his defeat would have been quite likely anyway. If we add Duras's stylistic tastes as a further argument for ♖f5, we will come to the conclusion that he did what he had to do.

Teichmann declined the sacrifice with 43...♕c3?, and this amounted not only to a tactical error but also, most importantly, to a positional blunder. Over the course of 23 moves Teichmann had rightly been holding up the e4-pawn and keeping the white bishop confined; then suddenly, of his own accord, he let the bird out of the cage. This dramatically increased the potential for combination. Duras of course played 44.e5 at once, bringing his bishop into the attack against the kingside and shutting his opponent's queen off from the defence of that wing. The resulting combinations did the rest. The final combination, in which the chief elements were the rooks cooperating on the f-file and the king coming to join them, concluded with a fine thematic mate.

Among the combinative ideas that involve a rook sacrifice in the course of their execution, practice has supplied plenty of instances where the sacrifice takes place on g7 (when Black has castled short). This type of sacrifice cannot, as yet, be called "theoretical" like the bishop sacrifice on h7 (see Chapter 14), but already we can draw certain parallels – which we will discuss later, once we have examined and analysed some examples. The rook sacrifice on g7 is of course carried out by White. But cannot Black execute an analogous combination with a rook sacrifice on g2 in corresponding circumstances? Our answer to this question would be: yes and no. Yes, inasmuch as any position or set of circumstances on the chessboard can be imagined with colours reversed. We cannot ignore the combinations of the genius Morphy in two of his games against Louis Paulsen. In both games Morphy, playing Black, sacrificed his rook on this very square. Here is how it happened.

L. Paulsen – P. Morphy

New York (blindfold game) 1853



Morphy announced mate in five moves:

23...♖xg2† 24.♔xg2 ♖g8†

Or 24...♕h3† 25.♔f2 ♕h2† 26.♔f3 ♖f8† and 27...♖xf7#.

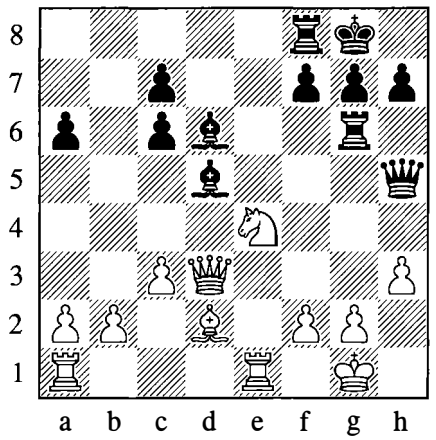
25.♔f3 ♕h5† 26.♔f2 ♕h2†

And mate next move.

0–1

L. Paulsen – P. Morphy

New York 1857



21...♖xg2†!

Black can also win with the less spectacular 21...f5 22.♘g3 ♕h4.

22.♔xg2 f5 23.f3

Now Morphy blundered.

23...♕g6†??

He could have won by force with 23...fxe4 24.fxe4 (24.♖xe4 also fails – to 24...♕g6† 25.♔h1 ♖xf3) 24...♕g6† 25.♔h1 ♖f2.

24.♘g5

This gave Paulsen good chances of even winning the game, but after handling the concluding phase inaccurately he had to be content with a draw.

...½–½

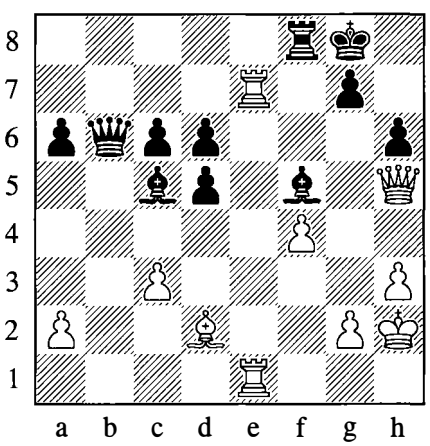
Both these historic examples depict for us the motifs and foundations of the sacrifice. It is important that the point where the rook is sacrificed should be defended only by the king. The purpose of the sacrifice is to shatter and open up the king's position, but to take advantage of this you need to have reserves ready to finish off the combination at once. In the first example, the reserves were the bishop on e6, the queen on h5 and the rook on a8. In the second, they were the queen, two bishops, and also a rook which would have made the concluding move (demonstrating the "theme") in both lines of the combination: 25...♖xf3 and 25...♖f2.

Nonetheless we do not intend to give special attention to the issue of a rook sacrifice on g2 by Black. The point is that practice has scarcely furnished any examples of attacks with such a sacrifice, whereas rooks have been sacrificed on g7 in a large number of games. And games from practice are our main criterion – indeed almost our only one – for the selection and examination of combinative themes. Most importantly, our systematic inquiry into the sacrifice on g7 can always be applied equally to the rare combinations in which Black sacrifices a rook on g2.

As to White's rook sacrifice on g7, we have come across it twice before, in the games Chigorin – Bird and Steinitz – Von Bardeleben (Chapter 15); but in those cases the sacrifice was subordinated to other ideas that we were using the games to illuminate. In the material that follows, this sacrifice will be the centre of our attention.

Berry – H. Pillsbury

Boston 1900



White is the exchange for a pawn up. On the other hand Black has two splendidly placed bishops and a strong mobile pawn group in the centre. It might seem that the players still have a lengthy struggle ahead of them, but in the assessment of this position the decisive word is spoken by the combinative motifs. The point g7 is defended by the king alone; White's rook has penetrated to the seventh rank, and it is against that same point that its action is powerfully directed. The reserves are also in readiness – the queen and the rook on e1, both in strong positions, and potentially also the white bishop. The following combination ensued:

32.♖xg7†! ♔xg7 33.♖e7† ♔g8

If 33...♔f6, then 34.♕h4† ♔g6 35.♕g3† ♔h5 36.♖g7, with the threats of ♖g5† and ♕f3†.

34.♕xh6 ♗g1† 35.♔h1 ♗d4

The only move!

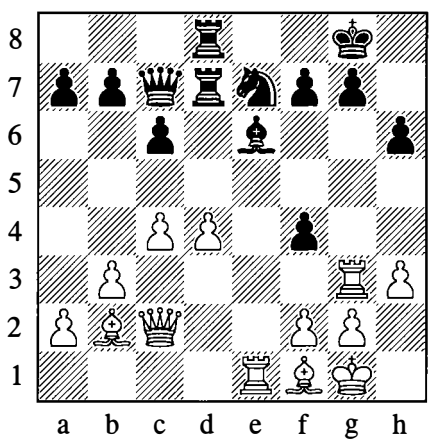
36.cxd4 ♕xd4 37.♕g5† ♔h8 38.♕h4† ♔g8 39.♕g3† ♔h8 40.♗c3

Black is mated in four more moves. Thus in the diagram position, White could have announced mate in 13.

1–0

L. Forgacs – O. Bernstein

St Petersburg 1909



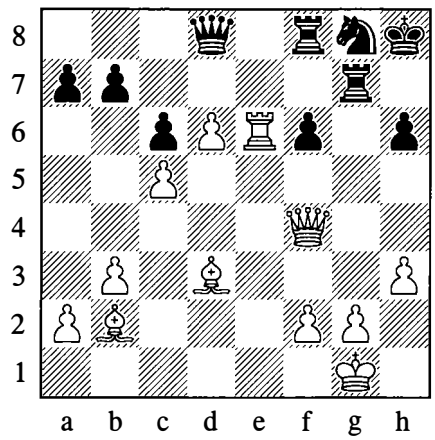
24.♖xg7†! ♔xg7 25.d5† f6 26.♖xe6 ♘g8 27.♕f5 ♖f8 28.♗d3

A fearsome position – all White's pieces have joined the attack.

28...♔h8 29.d6

29.♗xf6† ♘xf6 30.♖xf6 ♖xf6 31.♕xf6† ♔g8 32.♗f5 would also give White a winning attack.

29...♕d8 30.c5 ♖g7 31.♕xf4



We can now take stock. White has two pawns for the exchange; Black's king is half open, and all round it there are nothing but weaknesses; his shattered castled position is under attack from White's queen and rook, together with the two bishops acting in superb harmony; but even that is not all. White has a passed centre pawn, solidly fortified on the sixth rank; this pawn severely cramps Black's pieces and will hang over his head as a permanent threat. All this is more than enough to justify the combination. Black's position is hopeless, and yet the rest of the game is also of interest on account of his ingenious defence.

31...♖ff7 32.b4 a6 33.♗f5 a5 34.a3 axb4 35.axb4 b6 36.♗d4 bxc5 37.bxc5 ♕a8

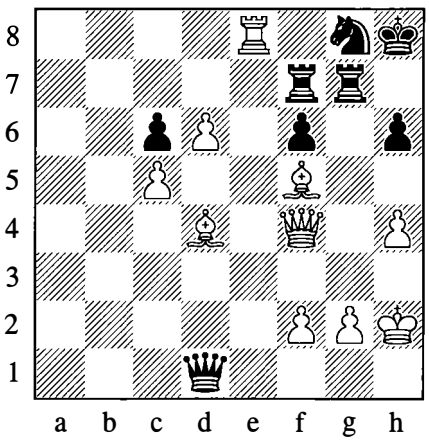
The black queen has broken out into open space.

38.h4 ♕a4 39.♖e8

White now has numerous threats, the chief of them being mate in three moves with 40.♕xh6†.

But White might have considered first 39.g3 or 39. ♗h3, to avoid the counterplay that now follows.

39...♕d1† 40.♔h2



40...♖xg2†!

A fine tactical chance, which is very nearly crowned with success. Black's combination is enabled by the weakness of g2 and the location of the rook that sacrifices itself, but his reserves are inadequate to follow the attack through. Moreover the white pawn on d6 proves to be a genuine and dangerous combinative factor.

41.♔xg2 ♖g7† 42.♕g3!

If White didn't have this queen sacrifice as a counter-combination, he would lose the game. All the same, we are justified in thinking that the possibility of this sacrifice is in the nature of things. A statement by Emanuel Lasker on this subject is interesting. In the book of the tournament, he writes that White has even the most violent possibilities under control.

42...♕xd4

42...♖xg3† first would not alter matters.

43.d7! ♕d5† 44.♔h2 ♖xg3 45.♔xg3 ♕xf5

Black has won the queen and both bishops, but this has proved inadequate to resist White's passed pawn. Once again an inconspicuous little pawn plays the decisive role!

46.d8=♕ ♔h7 47.♕c7†

White has already coped adequately with his opponent's ingenious counter-blows, and now "plays safe".

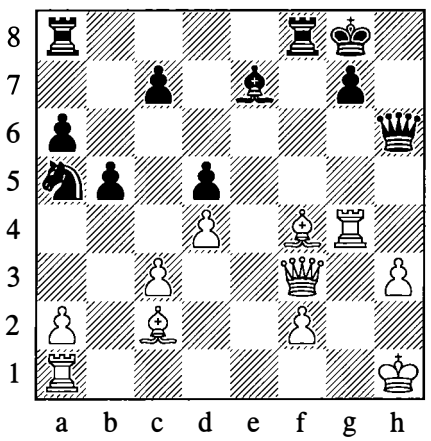
He could have won by taking the knight: 47.♖xg8 ♕e5† 48.♔g2 ♕e4† 49.♔h2!, and now 49...♕xh4† 50.♔g1; or 49...♕f4† 50.♔g1 ♕c1† 51.♔g2; or 49...♕e5† 50.♖g3.

47...♔h8 48.♕d8 ♔h7 49.♕c7† ♔h8 50.♕f7 ♕d3† 51.♔g2 ♕h7 52.♕xh7† ♔xh7 53.♖c8
1–0

The following position arose in the last round of the same tournament.

Em. Lasker – R. Teichmann

St Petersburg 1909



Black has the g7-point defended by his queen (as well as his king), and consequently the conditions are not yet suitable for a

combination with a rook sacrifice on that square. White is aiming to divert the black queen from the critical point.

If Black now plays 27...♕f6, there follows 28.♕xd5† ♕f7 29.♖xg7†! ♔xg7 30.♖g1† ♔h8 31.♗e5† ♗f6 32.♗xf6† ♕xf6 33.♕h5† and mate next move.

In fact Teichmann played:

27...♕e6

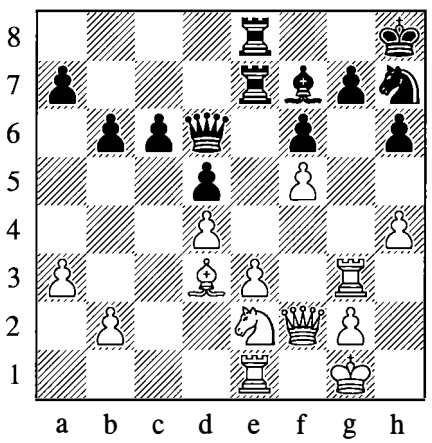
And then... Teichmann resigned at once, without waiting for Lasker to carry out his decisive combination: 28.♖xg7† ♔xg7 29.♖g1† ♔h8 30.♕h5† and 31.♕xh6#.

1–0

The occasion for a combination came about in a most instructive manner in the following game.

F. Marshall – A. Kupchik

Chicago 1926



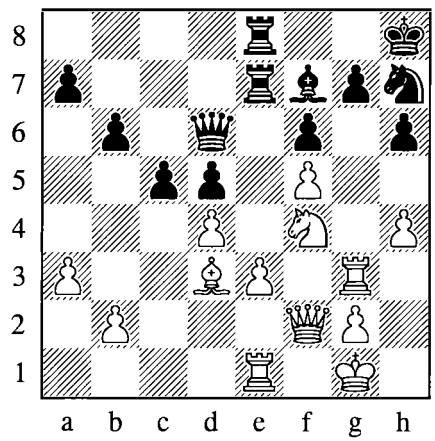
In assessing this double-edged and tense situation, there is a great deal – possibly dozens of considerations – to be taken into account. Probably White's position is somewhat preferable – not because of the weakness of g6, though that too may play its part under certain circumstances, but mainly on account of the c-file, where White can organize an attack against the c6-pawn. In the matter of territory, White also has some slight gains. The interesting point is that two combinative motifs attracted Marshall's sharp combinative eye – namely, the undefended position of the black queen and the weakness of the point g7, guarded only by the king. These two factors probably played no small part in Marshall's choice of move.

23.♘f4!

A crafty move with the apparent aim of bringing the queen to c2 and then systematically building up pressure against the pawn on c6. The cunning of the move lies in the fact that it simultaneously conceals a combinative scheme based on the factors just mentioned.

23...c5?

Generally speaking, an excusable oversight. Black is worried about not getting this move in soon enough; there was a threat of b2-b4 and ♕c2. All the same he should first have withdrawn his queen to d7, and afterwards set about solving his strategic problems.



24.♖xg7!

Kupchik was probably staggered by this sudden revelation. Capturing the rook turns out to be no good: 24...♔xg7 25.♕g3†, and

whichever way the king goes (or even if the knight intervenes), White wins the queen with a knight check. After losing the g7-pawn, Black cannot resist for long.

24...♕d8 25.♖g3

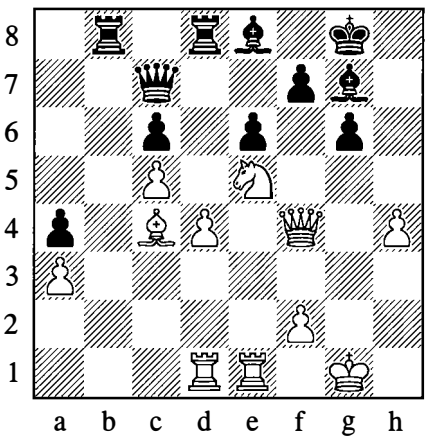
25.♖g6 would seem more energetic, but the simple retreat chosen by Marshall is good enough.

25...cxd4 26.♘g6† ♗xg6 27.fxg6 ♖xe3 28.♖exe3 dxe3 29.g7† ♔g8 30.♕f5
1–0

In the Kecskemet tournament of 1927, Alekhine was awarded a brilliancy prize for a game which featured a rook sacrifice on g7.

A. Alekhine – L. Asztalos

Kecskemet 1927



Black's king position is shaky, and although a knight sacrifice on g6 is not threatened at the present moment, the potential weakness of e6 and g6 compels Black to devote much of his pieces' energy to defending those points. Meanwhile White has a concrete plan for a combinative attack; it involves a further battering of Black's king position by an advance of the h-pawn, then the opening of the g-file for a rook to join in the attack. Black has no answer to this plan.

37.h5 gxh5 38.♔h1 ♖b7 39.♖g1

Everything is ready for the rook sacrifice.

39...♕e7 40.♖xg7†! ♔xg7 41.♖g1† ♔h7 42.♘f7!

Now 42...♕xf7 or 42...♗xf7 would be met by 43.♗d3†.

1–0

We present our two concluding examples in the form of complete games from Soviet contests – one of them played in 1960. This testifies to the fact that the "♖xg7" theme is still far from being exhausted.

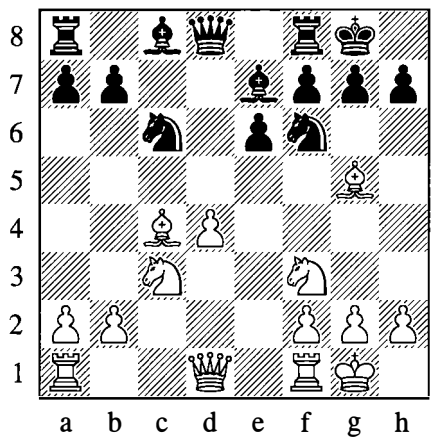
A. Tolush – A. Sokolsky

Nimzo-Indian Defence
18th USSR Championship, Moscow 1950

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0–0 5.♗d3 d5 6.♘f3 c5 7.0–0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♗xc4 ♘c6

Black has switched the game to the tracks of the Queen's Gambit Accepted, but with his bishop on b4, not e7. Seeing that next move he *does* withdraw the bishop to e7, the upshot is that he has lost a tempo.

10.♗g5 ♗e7



11.♕d3

This leads to an exchange of light-squared bishops, which favours Black as it gives him the chance to strengthen his grip on the central square d5. As a result of this state of affairs, White's isolated pawn is weakened.

It would probably have been useful to play 11.a3 first, not only in order to secure the bishop's retreat to a2 in case of need, but also to prepare b2-b4 and to deny Black the b4-square for the manoeuvre ...♘b4-d5.

It was also worth considering 11.♖e1, increasing the pressure on the squares e5 and e6.

11...♘a5 12.♗b5 ♗d7 13.♘e5 ♗xb5 14.♕xb5 a6 15.♕e2 ♘d5

Not 15...♕xd4 16.♖ad1 ♕a7 17.♘d7, after which White obtains an attack by opening up the black king's position with exchanges on f6.

16.♗d2 ♖c8 17.♖ad1 ♘c6

On 17...♘xc3 White would, in the present situation, retake with the bishop.

18.♗c1 ♘xc3

This exchange would be acceptable to Black if he were also to exchange on e5 next move.

He would also retain a good position after 18...♗f6 (suggested by Tolush).

19.bxc3 b5 20.♖d3 ♕d5

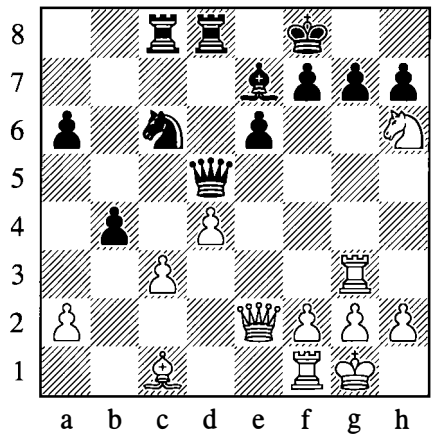
Here too, 20...♘xe5 21.dxe5 ♕b6 would have given Black a satisfactory game.

21.♘g4 ♖fd8 22.♖g3 b4?

Black fails to notice the rook sacrifice on g7. If White did not have this possibility, his centre would quickly be wrecked.

Black would have a sound position after either 22...g6 or 22...♔h8.

23.♘h6† ♔f8



24.♖xg7!

Black's king position is shattered and he comes under a mating attack; bunched in the centre and on the queenside, his pieces cannot come quickly to the aid of the king.

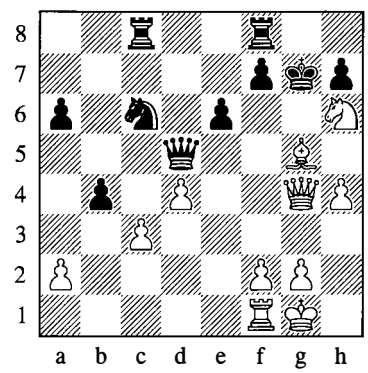
24...♔xg7 25.♕g4† ♗g5

Black's best option in his search for chances of resistance.

The answer to 25...♔f6 would be 26.c4! ♕a5 (26...♕xd4 27.♕g5#) 27.d5, and Black can resign.

26.c4

26.♗xg5 ♖f8 27.h4! would also lead to a quick win.



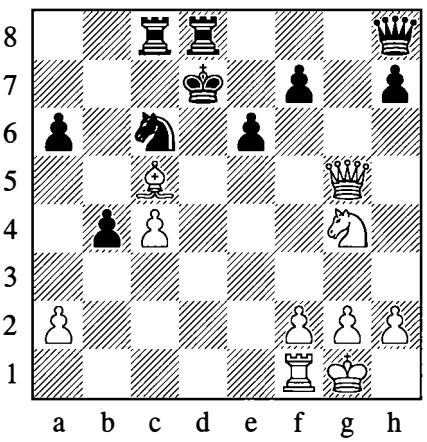
White threatens 28.c4 ♕xd4 29.♗f6†, and preventing this with 27...bxc3 loses in entertaining fashion: 28.♗e7†! ♔xh6 29.♗a3! ♖g8 30.♗c1† ♖g5 31.♗xg5† ♔g7 32.♗e7† ♔h6 33.♗a3!

26...♕xd4 27.♕xg5† ♔f8 28.♗e3?

This disturbs the logical flow of the combination, and Black unexpectedly starts to resist. He would have had to capitulate after 28.♕g8† ♔e7 29.♕xf7† ♔d6 30.♗f4† ♘e5 31.♘g4 ♖f8 32.♗xe5† ♕xe5 33.♖d1†.

28...♕h8 29.♗c5† ♔e8 30.♘g4 ♔d7

Black could have resisted stubbornly with 30...♖d3 31.♘f6† ♔d8.



31.♗b6

White regains his material and keeps the initiative, which is sufficient for a favourable conclusion to the fight.

Panov pointed out a more energetic continuation: 31.♕f4 ♖c7 32.♗b6 ♖b7 33.♕xf7†, and White acquires a material plus.

31...♖b8 32.♖d1† ♔e8 33.♗xd8 ♖xd8 34.♖xd8† ♘xd8 35.♘f6† ♔f8

The alternative is also hopeless: 35...♔e7 36.♘d5† ♔d6 37.♕e7† ♔e5 38.♕c5!. The threat of 39.f4† is deadly, and after 38...exd5 39.♕xd5† Black is either mated or loses his queen.

36.♕c5† ♔g7 37.♘h5† ♔h6 38.h4 ♕a1† 39.♔h2 f6 40.♘f4

White threatens ♕f8#. If 40...♔g7, then 41.♕e7† ♘f7 42.♘xe6†.

1–0

The fact that the rook sacrifice on g7 continues to find a place in tournament and match games between highly qualified players tells us that the tactical factors inviting this combination continue to be underestimated. We conclude our illustrative material with a game between two strong grandmasters.

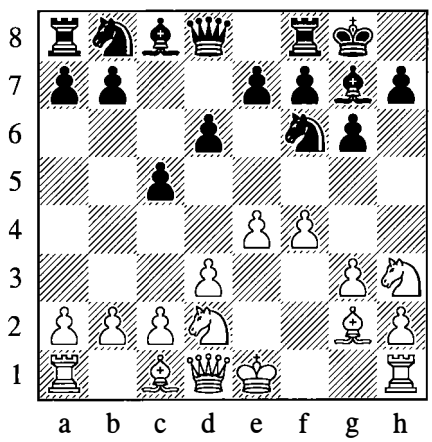
A. Kotov – I. Bondarevsky

Sicilian Defence
USSR Team Championship, Moscow 1960

1.d3 c5 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.e4

The contours of the Closed Variation of the Sicilian Defence are now clearly discernible.

4...d6 5.f4 ♘f6 6.♘d2 0–0 7.♘h3



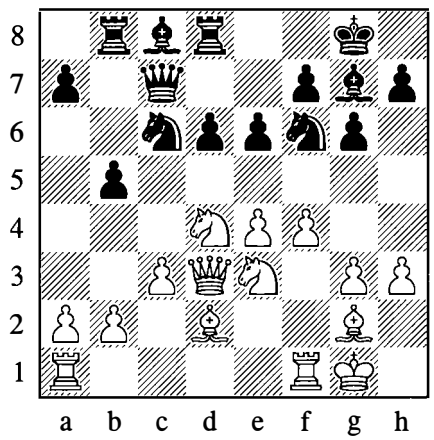
Every move contains its own idea, its own plan – and this is also true of White's ♘h3; for instance, with ♘f2 he can support the advance

of the g-pawn. The move is nevertheless unnatural. As a rejoinder 7...♘g4 is simplest and perhaps best.

7...♘c6 8.♘f3 c4 9.♘f2 cxd3 10.♕xd3 ♘g4 11.0–0 ♕c7

Black must surely have been thinking about 11...♕b6, but for some reason he rejects it – wrongly, as it seems to us. A possibility is then 12.c3 f5, when the play is sharp but not without prospects for Black.

12.c3 ♖b8 13.♘d1 b5 14.h3 ♘f6 15.♘e3 e6 16.♗d2 ♖d8 17.♘d4



A highly unpleasant move for Black to face. White is threatening both ♘xb5 and ♘xc6. Bondarevsky decides to go into a standard type of position where White possesses a strongpoint for his pieces on d4 but Black also has chances of his own.

17...d5 18.♘xc6 ♕xc6 19.e5 ♘d7 20.♘c2 ♘c5 21.♘d4 ♕b6 22.♕e3 ♗b7 23.♗e1 ♘e4 24.g4 f5 25.gxf5 gxf5

An incautious choice, but 25...exf5 would not be to everyone's liking.

26.♔h2

Hastening to bring a rook to the g-file.

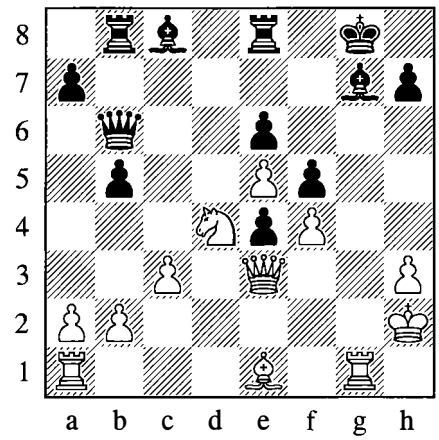
26...♖e8?

He should have taken measures to protect the point g7, for example with 26...♖d7.

27.♖g1 ♗c8

Black is now too late with his defence. On 27...♖e7, White plays 28.♗xe4 followed by ♗h4-f6.

28.♗xe4 dxe4



29.♖xg7†!

Most decisive, although increasing the pressure with 29.♗h4 ♖b7 30.♗f6 ♖f8 31.♕g3 ♖ff7 32.♖ad1 is also winning for White.

29...♔xg7 30.♗h4 ♔f7

The attack is more difficult to conduct in the event of 30...♖g8, although with 31.♖g1† ♔f7 32.♖xg8 ♔xg8 33.♕g3† ♔f8 34.♗g5! ♔e8 35.♗h6 White's pieces achieve the decisive penetration.

31.♕e2 ♖g8 32.♕h5†

The attack "plays itself".

32...♖g6

If 32...♔f8, then 33.♕h6† ♔e8 34.♕xh7.

33.♖g1 ♔f8 34.♖xg6 hxg6 35.♕h8† ♔f7 36.♗f6 ♕c5

Or 36...♖b7 37.♕g7† ♔e8 38.♕g8† ♔d7 39.♕f7#.

37.♕g7† ♔e8 38.♕xg6† ♔f8 39.b4

Black will be mated after 39...♕c7 40.♕h6†.

1–0

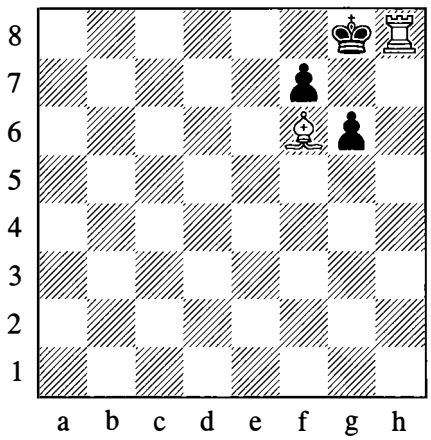
The conditions and execution of a combination with a rook sacrifice on g7 now present a wholly clear picture; even its details are precisely reflected in the illustrations and commentaries we have given. The causes of situations conducive to the sacrifice, the process of preparing it and the follow-up attack – all this, we can say already, comes close to being a stock pattern of events, and we may soon be able to ground it on a theoretical basis like some other types of combination. It remains for us to note the following. Once the rook has gone to the g-file, and provided that the g7 point is defended only by the king, it might seem that the operation of sacrificing a rook on that square demands no intensive work. We would like to take this opportunity to caution against such a superficial approach to any sacrifice, that of a rook on g7 included. Even the "theoretical" combination with a bishop sacrifice on h7 requires precise calculation, and practice has seen quite a few cases where that sacrifice has proved unsound in spite of the bad position of the king and the presence of reserve forces for the attack. This ought to apply all the more to a rook sacrifice on g7. The variations of the final crowning attack must be calculated concretely and accurately (within the bounds of the possible, of course). In the play leading up to the combination, you should consider how the rook's move to the g-file may be useful not only for the sacrifice but in the general context of your positional plan. If your opponent has to make moves that worsen his position in other sectors of the battlefield in order to defend against the sacrifice, then it goes without saying that this must be borne in mind when you attack the g7-point with your rook. It must not be forgotten that what is dangerous is not only the combination itself but also the threat of its execution. Both are good investments in the fight to gain or develop the initiative.

Chapter 19

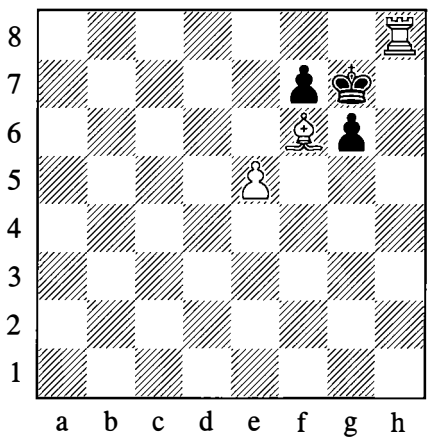
Harmonious Action of Rook and Bishop – The Theme of Trapping a Piece

When speaking of the harmonious actions of a rook and bishop, we are thinking chiefly of mating patterns, combinations to finish the game, which are typical in cases where these pieces cooperate to attack the opponent's king position. We shall illustrate eight typical mates that occur in combinations of this kind. Let us diagram the patterns.

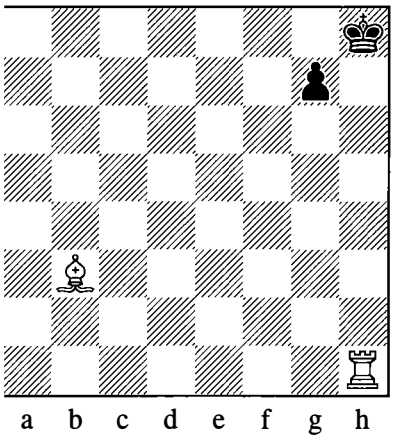
(1)



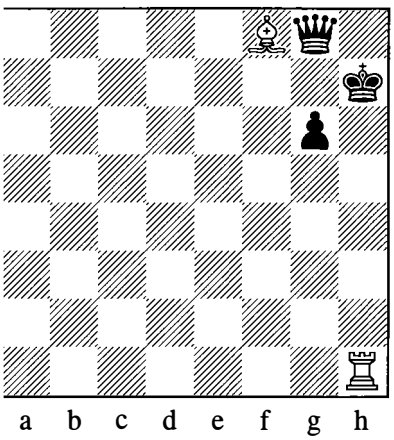
(2)



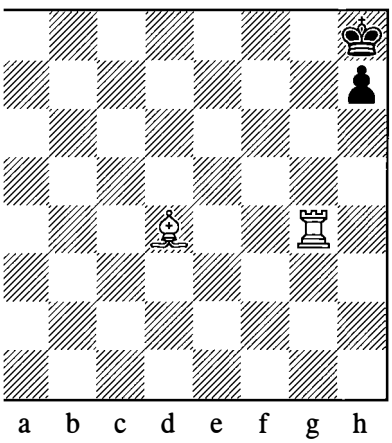
(3)



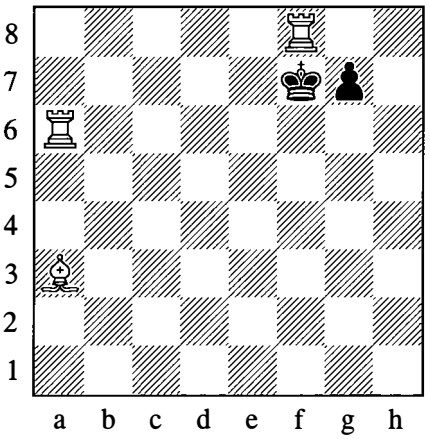
(4)



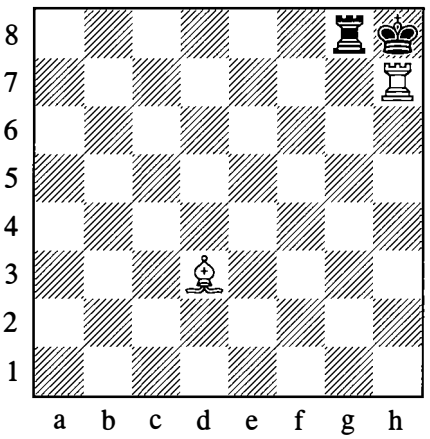
(5)



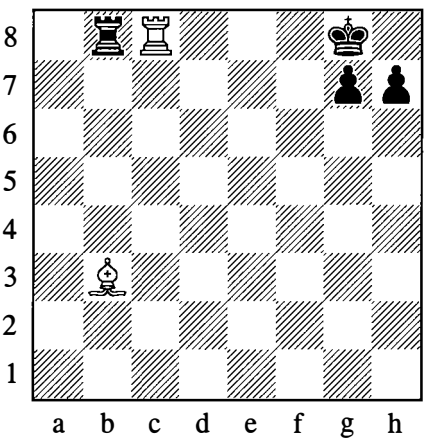
(6)



(7)



(8)



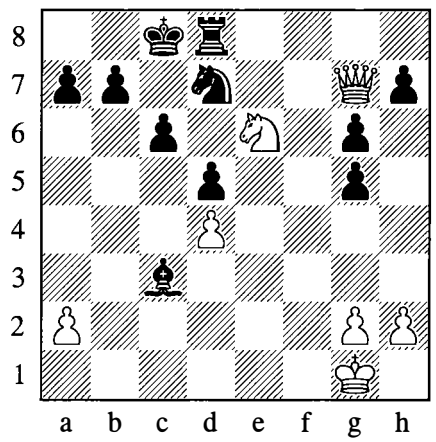
There are a few patterns that we are omitting – it is not our task to enumerate all conceivable varieties of rook-and-bishop mate, so we mainly confine ourselves to those themes that are most widespread in practice. Our survey is meant to remain "true to life"!

In the pages of this book we have come across some of these themes already. See for example the finish of the Kolisch – Loyd game (pattern number 3) from Chapter 13; or the Torre – Lasker game from Chapter 14, in which White executed the combination that goes by the name of a "seesaw" (pattern number 5). The latter is a most vivid illustration of the tactical cooperation between a bishop and a rook.

Another notable instance of this cooperation is the end of the following game.

M. Chigorin – O. Bernstein

3rd Russian Championship, Kiev 1903



Black had landed in a difficult position in the very opening, and was forced to give up his queen for a rook and bishop. Chigorin's subsequent play, however, was not best, and some quite good chances turned up for Black.

26...c5!?

Black takes the opportunity to become active. 26...♖e8 27.♕f7 ♖h8 would leave him very tied down.

27.♕e7?!

On 27.♘xd8?, Black has 27...♗xd4†.

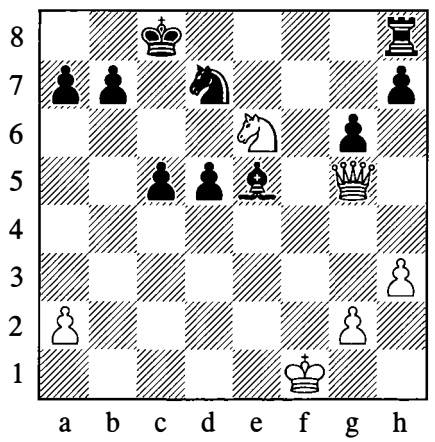
White would retain good chances with 27.♕xh7. Black's passed d-pawn may look dangerous after 27...♗xd4† 28.♘xd4 cxd4 29.♕xg6 ♘c5, but White can tame it with 30.♕f5†! ♔c7 31.♕xg5 d3 32.♕e7† ♘d7 33.♕e3.

27...♗xd4† 28.♔f1 ♖h8 29.♕xg5 ♗e5 30.h3?

This last move before the time control leads to White's ruin.

30.♘xc5? is no better: 30...♖f8† 31.♔e2 ♖e8 32.♕e3 d4 and White loses his knight.

After 30.♕e7, however, the outcome of the struggle would remain unclear.



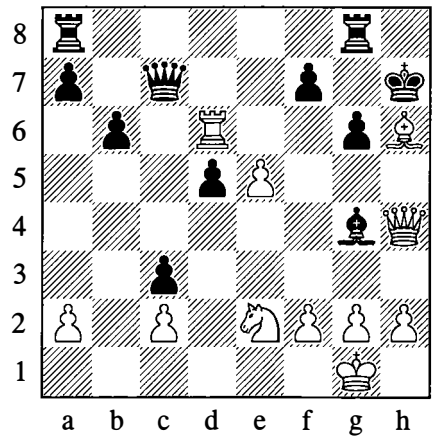
30...♖e8! 31.♘f4

Or 31.♕g4 ♘f6.

31...♗xf4 32.♕xd5 ♗g3
0–1

O. Duras – A. Olland

Carlsbad 1907



Black is the exchange up, but his position is hopeless in view of the irresistible attack by the enemy pieces against his exposed king. He has just played 24...♗c8-g4 to save himself from the threatened 25.♗f8#. White now replied:

25.♘f4

Not best, though still good enough to win.

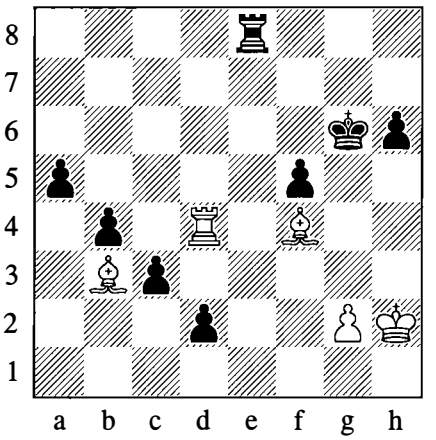
If he had more penetratingly assessed the harmonious cooperation between rook and bishop, White could have brought about the decision more quickly and effectively with a combination forcing mate in three moves: 25.♗f8† ♗h5 26.♕xh5†! gxh5 27.♖h6#

25...♖h8 26.♘xd5 ♕xd6 27.exd6 ♗h5 28.♗e3 ♖ad8 29.♕g5
1–0

It is interesting to note that failures to spot similar mates are not isolated occurrences; in the following endgame both players overlooked a mate of this type.

I. Boleslavsky – M. Botvinnik

Sverdlovsk 1943



This highly unusual position arose from an exceedingly sharp and tense struggle right from the opening. The originality and intensity of the situations that had come about in this game had evidently put both opponents under severe fatigue. Black has five pawns for two bishops, but his king is exposed to attack. His chances lie in the fact that his pawns on d2 and c3 are tying the white bishop to the d1-a4 diagonal and the white rook to the d-file.

In the game there followed:

58...♖e1

Black now threatens to attack the white bishop perpetually by manoeuvring along the first rank.

59.♖d6† ♔g7?

This should have led to immediate loss; Black had to play 59...♔h7.

60.♗xh6† ♔h7 61.♗g5?

Returning the favour! Instead of finishing the combination with 61.♗f8 and inevitable mate on h6, White brings his bishop back and misses his chance to exploit the ideal harmony in the actions of the rook and the bishops.

61...♖b1 62.♗c2 ♖c1 63.♗xf5† ♔g7 64.♖d7† ♔f8 65.♗xd2 cxd2 66.♖xd2 b3

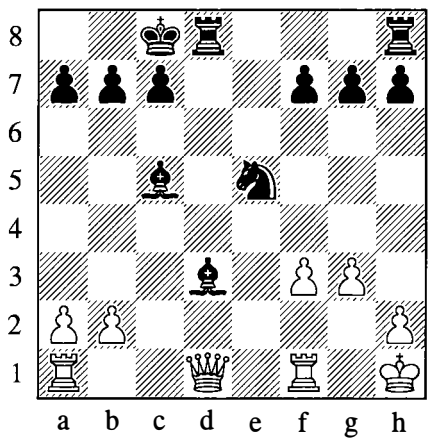
And on the 89th move the game ended in a draw.

...½–½

An attack with rooks and bishop was beautifully conducted by Mieses in the following position.

A. Olland – J. Mieses

Carlsbad 1907

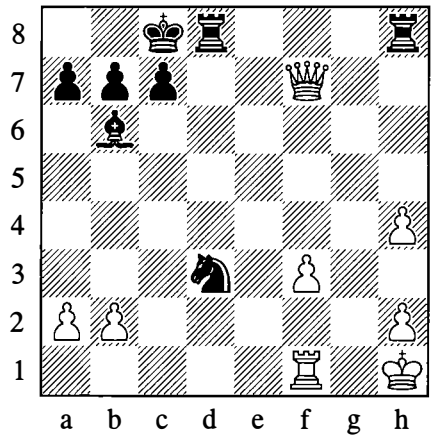


Black has three minor pieces and a pawn for a queen, which gives us cause to prefer his position even from a purely material viewpoint. But in addition he possesses a convincing initiative, the main target of which is the dislocated entourage of the white king. In order to clear the air, White is prepared to part with more material – the exchange – given that 18.♖e1 would be well answered even by 18...♗e4, not to mention 18...♖he8 with the threat of ...♗b5-c6.

Events unfolded as follows:

18.♕c1 ♗b6 19.♕g5 ♗xf1 20.♖xf1 ♘d3! 21.♕xg7 h5! 22.♕xf7 h4 23.gxh4

Of course the advance of the pawn to h3 cannot be allowed.



23...♘f2† 24.♖xf2

Mate in two otherwise!

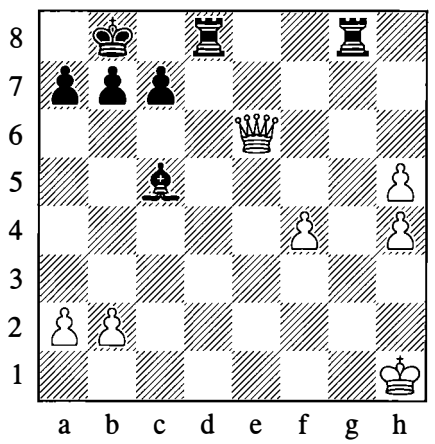
24...♗xf2 25.h5 ♖hg8

Now Black will faultlessly play a "concerto" for two rooks and a bishop.

26.♕e6† ♔b8 27.h4 ♗c5

With the unambiguous threat of 28...♖d1† 29.♔h2 ♗d6†.

28.f4



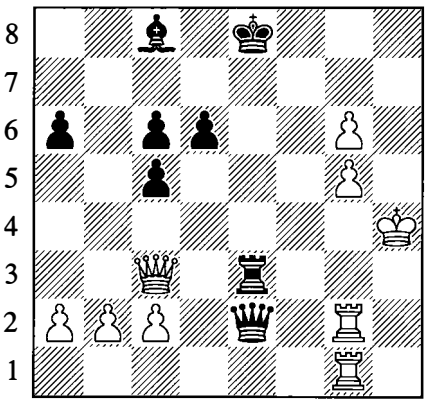
Black announced mate in five moves by means of the following combination:

28...♖d1† 29.♔h2 ♗g1† 30.♔h1 ♗e3† 31.♔h2 ♗xf4† 32.♔h3 ♖h1#

An incredible case, where a mate with rook and bishop was repeatedly missed, occurred in the following game.

G. Stoltz – H. Pilnik

Interzonal Tournament, Stockholm 1952



Black had conducted the attack splendidly, and Stoltz was already prepared to bow to the inevitable. It is perfectly clear that the attention of the players – grandmasters both – was bound to be focused on the mate with ...♖h3 which is being prevented by the white queen on c3. This mating idea is what simply stands out in the context of the whole position.

Nevertheless, Pilnik played:

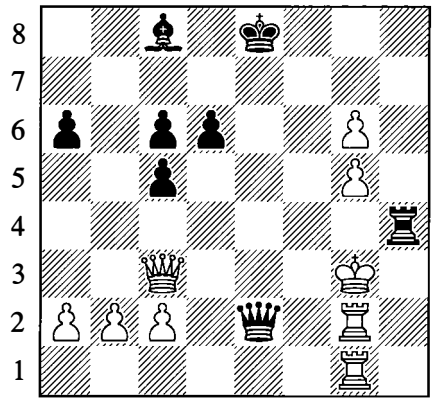
36...♖e4†

Instead of the obvious 36...♕c4†, leading to 37.♕xc4 ♖h3#, or 37.♖g4 ♖xc3 38.♖xc4 ♖h3#.

37.♔g3 ♖e3† 38.♔h4 ♖e4†

Still not noticing what was staring him in the face.

39.♔g3 ♖g4† 40.♔h2 ♖h4† 41.♔g3



With time trouble now over, Black agreed a draw instead of delivering mate in three moves with the simple combination 41...♖h3† 42.♔f4 ♖f3† and 43...♕e5#.

½–½

We believe that such mistakes occur not as a result of time shortage (or noise in the tournament hall!), but merely because there are players even at grandmaster level who underrate the combinative component in the creative process of the chess struggle.

In a variation of the Giuoco Piano familiar to most chess players, the power of bishop and rook in harmony is demonstrated most impressively.

V. Knorre – M. Chigorin

St Petersburg 1874

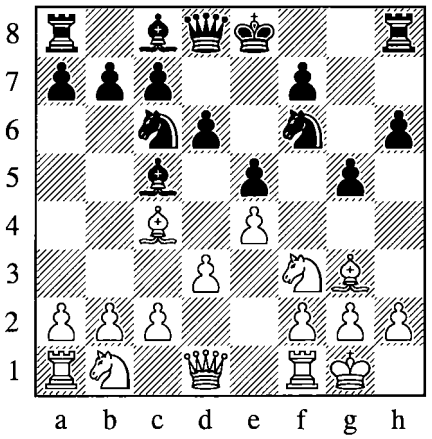
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.d3 d6 5.0–0 ♘f6

White should answer 5...♗g4 with 6.c3.

6.♗g5 h6 7.♗h4

Better 7.♗e3 or 7.♗xf6.

7...g5 8.♗g3



8...h5!

This bold attack immediately steers the game into the channel of combinative ideas.

Another good move for Black is 8...♗g4.

9.♘xg5

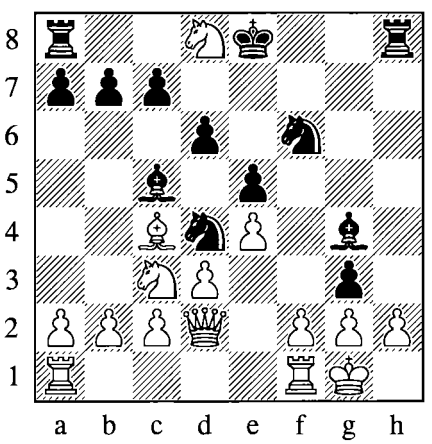
At this point the correct response to Black's assault is Dubois' move 9.h4.

9...h4! 10.♘xf7 hxg3 11.♘xd8 ♗g4 12.♕d2 ♘d4!

This move contains numerous combinative threats; in the background there are thematic mates with bishop and rook, also rook and knight, and others.

13.♘c3

After 13.h3! ♘e2†, if White doesn't fall for 14.♔h1? ♖xh3†! 15.gxh3 ♗f3#, but continues 14.♕xe2 ♗xe2 15.♘e6, there is still everything to play for.



13...♘f3† 14.gxf3 ♗xf3

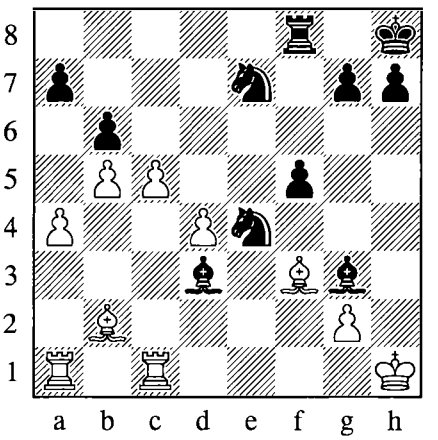
And White loses, as he has no defence against what constitutes the main theme of the combination – the mate with the rook on h1 after 15.hxg3 or 15.h3 ♖xh3. Black is also threatening mate with 15...gxh2#.

0–1

Capablanca concluded the next game with a small but, in its way, elegant combination.

A. Nimzowitsch – J.R. Capablanca

San Sebastian 1911



Although Black has a clear advantage, the dénouement came about quicker than was to be expected.

32...♖f6

Threatening mate with ...♖h6† and ...♗f2#.

33.♗xe4

There is no use in running with 33.♔g1 as Black then plays 33...♗f2†, followed by checkmate on h6 with the rook.

In taking the knight, White may have supposed that he was at least escaping mate.

33...♗f2!

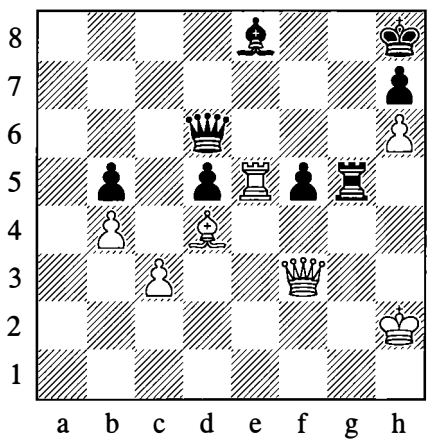
A pretty finish, involving two thematic mates: 34...♖h6# at once, or 34.g3 ♗xe4† and then 35...♖h6#.

0–1

White concluded his attack with superb elegance in the following game.

O. Duras – R. Spielmann

Bad Pistyan 1912



Black has just played 44...♕d6, pinning the white rook and thereby parrying the chief threat of 45.♖xe8#. What makes the situation so tense is not only the dangerous position of the black king but also the totally exposed state of the white one, which allows Black to create various counter-threats. Thus White is unable, for instance, to unpin his rook with the natural moves 45.♕f4 or 45.♔h1; in either case he would be mated himself after 45...♕xh6†. Yet without unpinning, he cannot continue his attack. Nor has he time for preparatory manoeuvres – Black is threatening to play ...♔g8 and ...♗f7, which would secure him the initiative.

The problem is solved by a combination which, as it turns out, Duras had seen in advance.

45.♕g3!! ♕xh6†

There is nothing else left. Obviously 45...♖xg3 would be answered by 46.♖xe8#.

46.♕h3 ♕d6

Even after the queen exchange, Black would be losing at least his bishop.

47.♔h1! ♔g8 48.♖xe8† ♔f7 49.♖h8

1–0

Two more games will illustrate the combinative potential of the harmonious operation of rook and bishop.

V. Alatortsev – I. Boleslavsky

Old Indian Defence

18th USSR Championship, Moscow 1950

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3 e5 4.e4 exd4 5.♕xd4 ♘c6 6.♕d2 g6 7.b3 ♗g7 8.♗b2 0–0

White has fallen behind in development and is unable to utilize the point d5 for his pieces (primarily his knights); this casts doubt on the legitimacy of the whole variation he has adopted against the Old Indian.

9.♗d3 ♘g4 10.♘f3

This is forced, although earlier White must surely have been planning to develop the knight on e2. The trouble is that because the white king has lingered in the centre, the storm clouds of combination are already thickening.

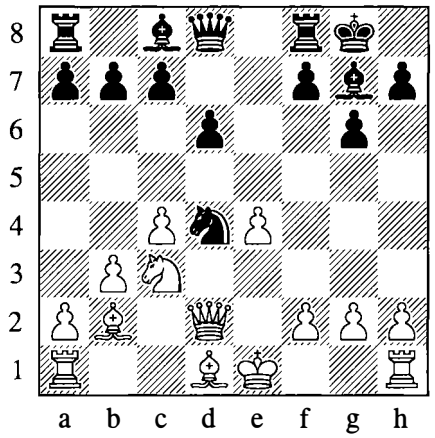
Here for instance is one of the possibilities indicated by Boleslavsky: 10.0–0–0 f5 11.exf5 ♘b4 12.♗e4 ♖xf5 13.♗xf5 ♗xf5, with numerous threats.

If instead 10.♘ge2, then 10...♘ce5 11.0–0 ♘xh2 12.♔xh2 ♕h4† 13.♔g1 ♘g4 14.♕f4 ♗e5.

10...♘ge5 11.♗e2 ♘xf3† 12.♗xf3 ♘d4

13.♗d1

White defends himself patiently, in the expectation that with the occupation of d5 his turn will eventually come.



13...f5 14.exf5

The further advance of the f-pawn is not to be allowed.

14...♗xf5 15.♘e2?

It was essential to play 15.0–0.

15...♘xe2 16.♗xe2 ♗xb2 17.♕xb2 ♕g5

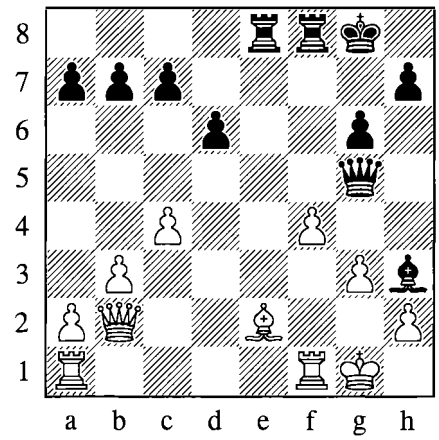
The prelude to launching an attack on the white king, in which Black's rook and bishop will work together in harmony. The further course of events is somewhat reminiscent of Black's attack in the Maroczy – Marshall game (see Chapter 18).

18.g3 ♖ae8

Compelling White to castle on the kingside, where his king will not find any peace. At the moment Black is threatening ...♗g4 or ...♗d3.

19.0–0 ♗h3 20.f4

If the rook moves away, a combination with ...♖xf2 follows; for example, 20.♖fc1 ♖xf2! 21.♔xf2 ♕e3† 22.♔e1 ♕g1† 23.♔d2 ♖xe2† 24.♔xe2 ♕xh2† and 25...♕xb2.



20...♗xf1!!

The point of Black's queen sacrifice and his combinative idea will be fully revealed by the harmonious action of rook and bishop in the next phase of the attack.

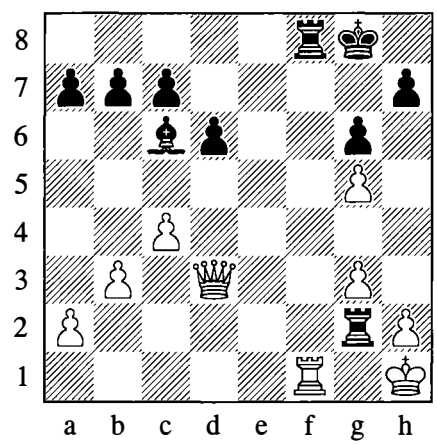
21.fxg5 ♖xe2 22.♕c3 ♗g2 23.♕d3

On 23.♖e1, Black plays 23...♗h3.

23...♗f3

Terrible damage with 24...♖g2† is threatened; White has no defence.

24.♖f1 ♖g2† 25.♔h1 ♗c6!



A "seesaw" structure has been erected to threaten leaps with the rook. This is deadly.

26.♖xf8† ♔xf8

The rook exchange has not improved White's position. To save his king, he has to give up his queen.

27.♕f1† ♖f2†
0–1

In this game the problem of harmony was optimally solved by Black's rook and bishop.

Y. Sakharov – S. Levitsky

English Opening
29th Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1960

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.g3 g6

This way of developing Black's forces, in imitation of his opponent, may be playable, but he would feel more confident in the opening if he continued on classical lines with 4...c5 or even 4...e5.

On the other hand the natural 4...b6 cannot be approved of here, in view of 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.♕a4†, and Black has to make the awkward move 6...♗c6.

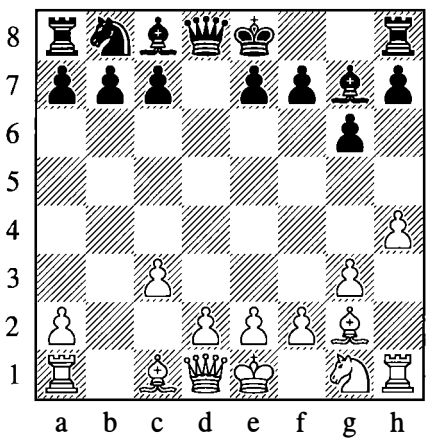
5.♗g2 ♘xc3

This exchange is poor for a number of reasons, and in general it is hard to explain. Surely it is not played solely in order to remove the knight from attack with tempo? Any other move of this knight, not to mention 5...c6, could fit in with Black's development as a useful link in his opening plan.

6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.h4

With your forces not yet mobilized, you are not recommended to hurry with lightweight "attacks" on the flank. Before and above all else, they weaken your own position. Such "pot shots" with pawns smack of gambling rather than a serious game plan. At the same time it must be observed that with this somewhat nonchalant attitude to the future, the tactical tension sometimes increases by leaps and bounds.

The normal plan for White would involve concentrated pressure along the b-file (♕b3, ♖b1), plus a sturdy central pawn outpost on d4 with the knight developed on e2. This would be just the plan to make Black regret exchanging on c3.



7...0–0

Black decides he has nothing to fear. In practice, Black has usually taken action against the further advance of the h-pawn by playing 7...h6 or 7...h5.

8.h5 ♕d6

Black has many good plans. This one may not be bad, although bringing the queen out early tends to entail certain inconveniences.

A good idea would be 8...♘c6, followed by ...♗f5 or ...♗g4.

9.hxg6 hxg6 10.♖b1 ♖d8?!

Starting to develop the queenside with 11...♘d7 is more advisable.

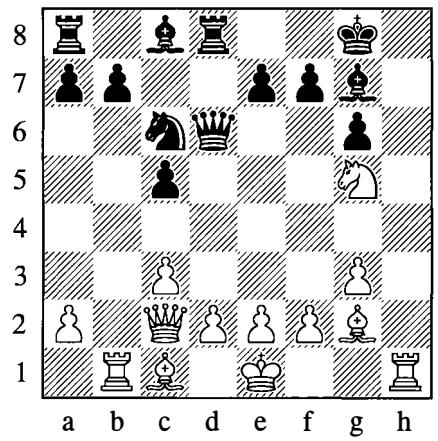
11.♕c2

With 11.♖xb7!? White could win a pawn; Black does not seem to obtain sufficient compensation.

11...c5

Black should be making haste to develop, by playing 11...♘d7 or 11...♘c6 here.

12.♘f3 ♘c6 13.♘g5



13...b6

After this move, Black's position is difficult.

Black should have played 13...♗f5. If White replies 14.d3 then 14...c4 induces a weakening of the d3-point. Against the reply 14.♕b3, Black has 14...c4! 15.♕xc4 ♘e5, winning the exchange.

14.♕b3 e6 15.♘e4 ♕e5 16.d3

If White tries 16.♘xc5, it turns out in Black's favour after 16...♕xc5 17.♗a3 ♕g5 18.♗xc6 ♕xd2†.

16...♘a5 17.♕c2 ♗b7 18.♗f4 ♕f5

Despite having played in a manner that was far from best, Black has some counter-chances, mainly because White's position is not at all embellished by the situation of his king.

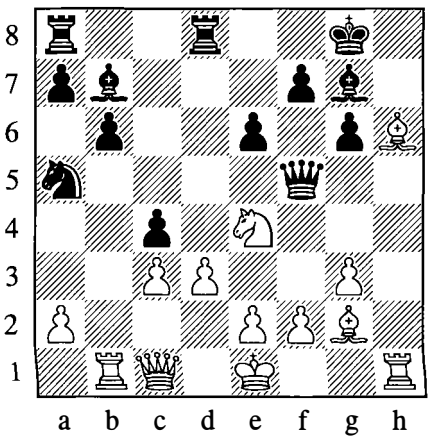
19.♕c1

Black would answer 19.♗h3 with 19...♕d5, when White does not have anything better than returning the bishop to g2.

The most promising option for White is 19.c4, cutting out Black's counterplay based on ...c4.

19...c4! 20.♗h6

The tension has reached its height; the crisis, which will erupt into tactics, has clearly arrived.



20...cxd3

If 20...♗h8, White would probably play 21.♗f8!, threatening ♖xh8†.

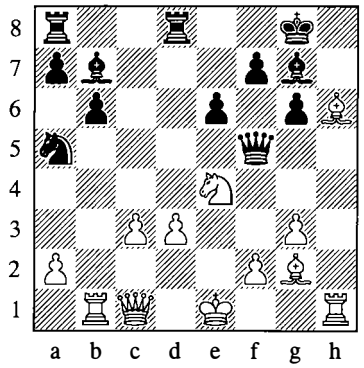
His attack is then not easy to repel – for example 21...♗f6 or 21...♗e5 are decisively met by 22.♕h6.

However, after Black's best defence, 21...g5! 22.♖h5 ♔xf8 23.♖xh8† ♔g7 24.♖h5 f6, the position remains complicated.

21.♗xg7?

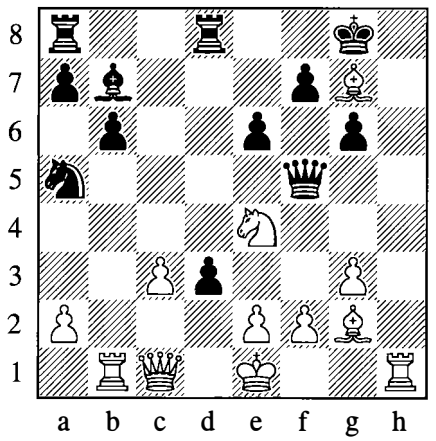
Although this move involves a pretty combinative idea, with a mating theme that relies on the harmonious action of rook and bishop, it is nonetheless a mistake which will only justify itself after the opponent's mistaken reply.

The correct continuation of the attack was 21.exd3!.



This pawn cannot be taken: 21...♖xd3? 22.♗xg7 ♗xe4 23.♕h6 and Black is soon mated.

Black should play 21...♗e5, with an unclear position. The insertion of the exchange of pawns on d3 is clearly a help to Black, as we can see (for example) from the variation 22.♗h3? ♕f3.



21...d2†?

This loses the game.

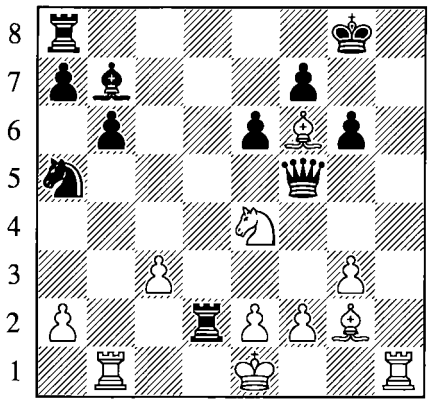
Black had to play 21...♗xe4. Then 22.♕h6 fails to 22...d2†.

If instead 22.exd3, then 22...♗xg2 23.♕h6 f6, and after 24.♕h7† ♔f7 White cannot do anything to the black king.

22.♕xd2!

Black had only reckoned with 22.♘xd2? ♗xg2.

22...♖xd2 23.♗f6!



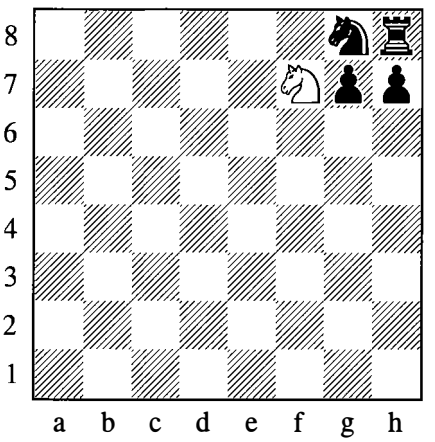
23...♕xf6 24.♘xf6† ♔g7 25.♗xb7 ♖ad8 26.♘e4

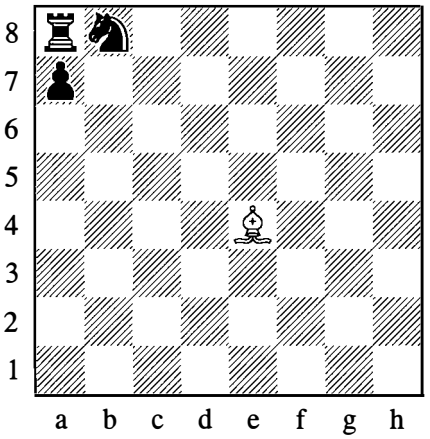
And White is a piece up.

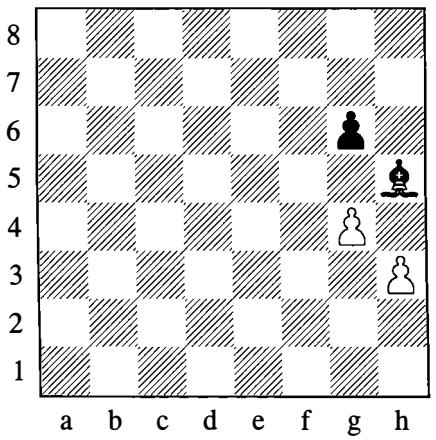
1–0

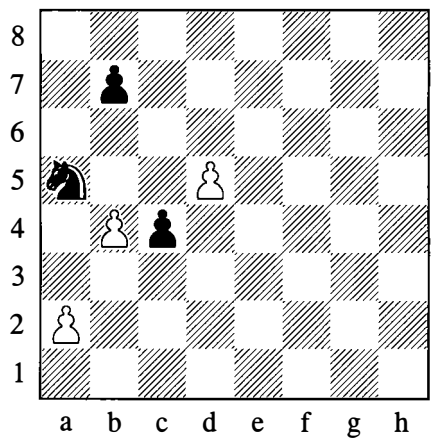
To conclude this chapter, we wish to touch on one small but distinctive combinative theme. Speaking figuratively, we could call it the theme of "checkmating" a piece. This is not a question of winning a piece by a pin or fork, but of attacking it when it cannot move away – either because all the squares in its range are occupied by pieces or pawns of its own colour, or because its few retreat squares are under attack from pawns or pieces of the other side.

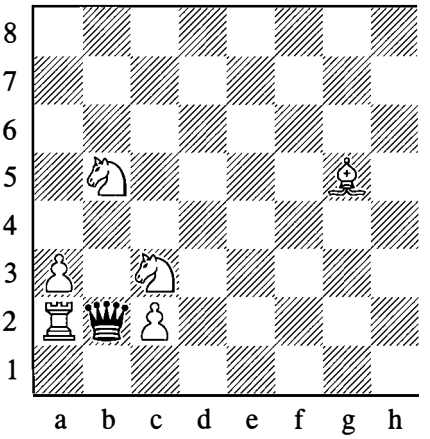
Here are some schematic representations of such themes.









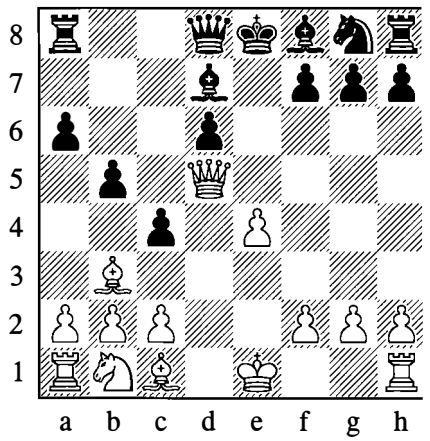


Let us begin with a small example fro openings. In the Ruy Lopez there is a known variation which inexperienced amateurs sometimes fall into:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 d6 b5 6.♗b3 ♘xd4 7.♘xd4 exd4 8.♕xd4

White should play 8.♗d5.

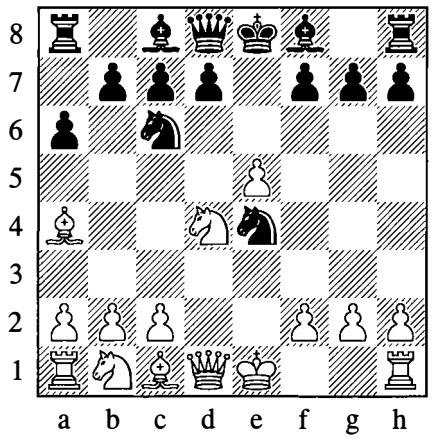
8...c5 9.♕d5 ♗e6 10.♕c6† ♗d7 11.♕d



And the white bishop is trapped. Th become known as the Noah's Ark trap.

It should be mentioned that a si combinative theme also occurs in some Ruy Lopez lines, such as this one:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.d4 exd4 6.e5 ♘e4 7.♘xd4



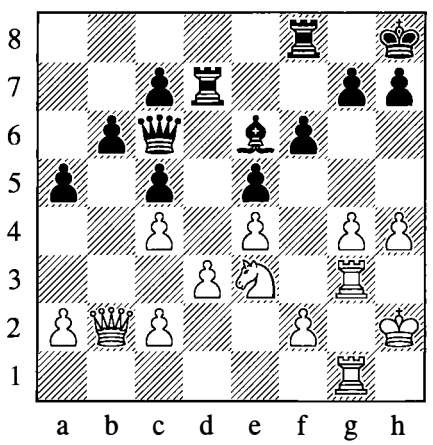
7...♘xf2!? 8.♔xf2 ♕h4† 9.♔e3 ♕xd4† 10.♕xd4 ♘xd4 11.♔xd4 b5 12.♗b3 c5†

By trapping the bishop Black recovers his piece, remaining afterwards with a pleasant game.

The following game saw a curious case of a concerted operation to trap the black queen.

A. Nimzowitsch – P. Leonhardt

San Sebastian 1911



Thinking about what his opponent's plan might be, Nimzowitsch came to the conclusion (the correct one, as it turned out) that what Black wanted, neither more nor less, was to penetrate with his queen to d4. Considering the closed nature of the position, which meant that there was no need to hurry into anything, Nimzowitsch decided – as a contingency plan – to set a snare for the queen on the d4-square. Events unfolded at a rapid pace.

27.♖g2

The aim of this move is to protect the f2-pawn; this is of vital importance for the trap that White is concocting.

27...♕d6

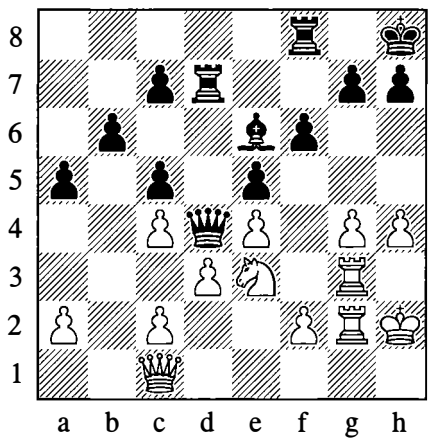
Heading for perdition!

28.♕c1

Placing a foolproof lock on the exit from d4.

28...♕d4?

Straight into the trap! Nimzowitsch must be given due credit for his prescience. Leonhardt probably realized that the invasion on d4 was not dangerous to White, but decided to make a little "noise" if he could.



29.♘d5!

The queen is trapped – the only thing left for it to do is sell itself as dearly as possible.

29...♖xd5 30.c3 ♕xd3 31.exd5!

After 31.♖xd3 ♖xd3, the advantage would pass to Black.

31...♕xc4 32.dxe6 ♕xe6 33.♕c2 c4 34.♕f5 ♕xf5 35.gxf5 ♖f7 36.♖g4 b5 37.a4 c6 38.♖g1

And Black soon resigned.

...1–0

A. Alekhine – J. Blackburne

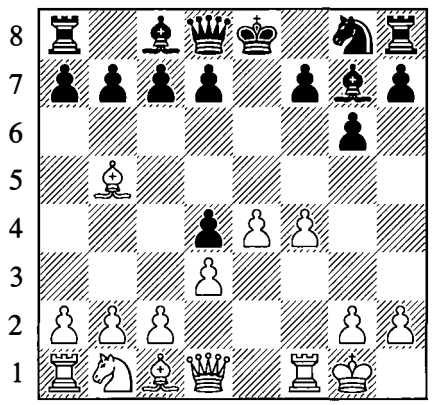
St Petersburg 1914

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘d4

Blackburne repeatedly employed this active defence in the St Petersburg tournament, invariably coupling it with the development of his king's bishop on g7.

4.♘xd4 exd4 5.0–0 g6 6.d3 ♗g7 7.f4

Capablanca in *his* game with Blackburne played a preliminary 7.♘d2, continuing only after 7...♘e7 with 8.f4.

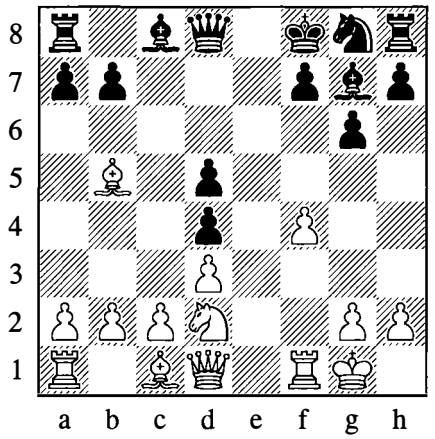


7...c6 8.♗c4 d5 9.exd5 cxd5 10.♗b5† ♔f8!

A combinative move that sharpens the position. The point is that the white bishop on b5 now has the look of a loner, and White should be worried about its isolated state. The simplest way to free himself from this worry would be to play 11.♗a4. Other possibilities would be 11.♕e1 or 11.♖e1 – and finally 11.♗d2, or even 11.b4. Carelessly, White passed up all these possibilities.

11.♘d2?

After this mistake, the bishop is trapped and will perish.



11...♕a5 12.a4 a6 13.♘b3 ♕d8

The bishop is caught; the problem for White is to obtain something in return for it.

14.♗d2 axb5 15.axb5 ♖xa1 16.♗b4† ♘e7 17.♕xa1 ♗f6 18.♕a7 b6 19.♖e1

Threatening ♘xd4.

19...♗e6 20.♔h1 h5? 21.♗xe7† ♕xe7 22.♕xb6 ♕b4 23.♕c5† ♕xc5 24.♘xc5 ♗d8?!

There was no reason to avoid the obvious and strong 24...♔e7.

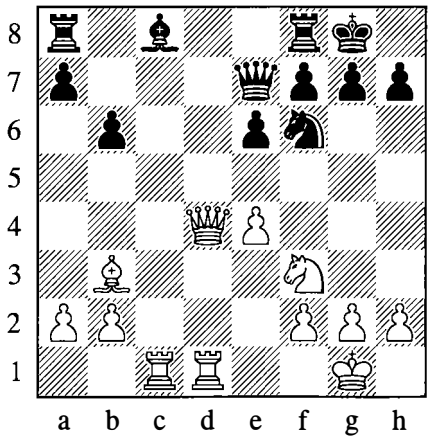
25.♘xe6† fxe6 26.♖xe6 ♔f7 27.♖d6 ♗e7 28.♖xd5 ♖c8 29.c4 dxc3 30.bxc3 ♖xc3

Despite the fact that Black's chances are still to be preferred, White succeeded in exchanging off the last black pawns, and on the 45th move the players agreed a draw.

...½–½

G. Levenfish – F. Dus-Chotimirsky

Leningrad 1934



18.e5 ♘h5

Black probably reckoned his knight would be relatively safe here. In answer to 19.g4 he has 19...♗b7, with threats of ...♗xf3 and ...♕g5.

On the other hand after 18...♘e8, his position would be hopelessly cramped. White's simplest way of exploiting this would be 19.♕d8 ♕xd8 20.♖xd8 ♗b7 21.♖xa8 ♗xa8 22.♘d4. A move indicated by Levenfish, 19.♕a4, would also be good.

19.g4!

White is winning the knight all the same.

19...♗b7 20.♕e3 ♗xf3 21.♕xf3 ♕g5 22.h4 ♕f4 23.♔g2

23.♖c3 leads to the same result – but not 23.♕e2, in view of 23...♘g3 with defensive resources.

23...♕xe5 24.gxh5

White has a piece for a pawn, and holds the initiative – the outcome of the struggle is clear.

In our next example, Euwe was evidently thrown off balance by the stormy opening in which Alekhine offered a piece sacrifice, and he overlooked a simple combination on the theme of a trapped rook.

A. Alekhine – M. Euwe

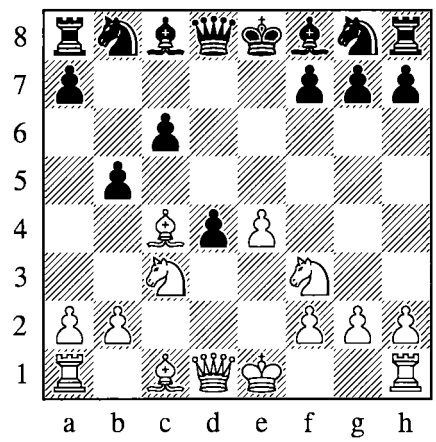
Queen's Gambit, Slav Defence
World Championship (6), Netherlands 1937

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 dxc4 4.e4 e5 5.♗xc4 exd4 6.♘f3

This has become a historic position. Numerous analyses, with which Alekhine himself agreed, have shown that Black ought to accept the knight sacrifice with 6...dxc3 7.♗xf7† ♔e7 8.♕b3 cxb2 9.♗xb2 ♕b6 etc. This eventually turns out in his favour.

Euwe, however, conceived the idea of driving the white bishop back to b3 before anything else, so as to eliminate that square from the white queen's range. In the heated tactical atmosphere, this positional consideration proved wholly out of place.

6...b5



7.♘xb5!

Now on 7...cxb5, White plays 8.♗d5 and the trapped rook on a8 perishes.

7...♗a6 8.♕b3

Obviously Black's position is thoroughly bad. He resigned as early as move 23.

...1–0

A combination making a strong impact by its suddenness and marked originality, and based on the theme of trapping a rook, was carried out in the following game. Both opponents seemed to be playing the opening on strict classical lines, and nothing foretold the combinative outburst.

S. Freiman – I. Rabinovich

Grünfeld Defence
9th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1934

1.♘f3 d5 2.d4 ♘f6 3.c4 c6 4.e3 g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♕b3 0–0 7.♗d2 ♕b6

A move that leaves White's strong reply out of account; it would appear to have been dictated by Black's wish to develop his bishop on f5, which the white queen on b3 is preventing.

However, Black's task in this difficult opening variation is to prepare the ...c6-c5 advance; otherwise the development of his king's bishop on g7 will be rather hard to justify. He needed to commence this plan by fortifying the d5 point, a purpose that would be served by 7...e6.

8.♕a3! e6

Returning his queen to d8 was worth considering.

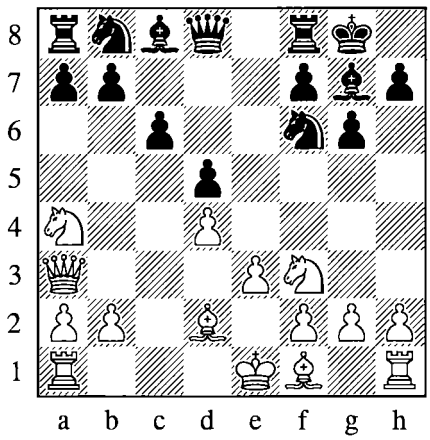
9.cxd5 exd5

This makes it possible for White to execute his highly original combination.

Recapturing with 9...cxd5 is correct; if White tries 10.♖c1 ♘c6 11.♘a4 ♕d8 12.♗b5 ♗d7 13.♘c5, then Black can solve his problems by 13...♘e4!, with the idea of 14.♘xb7 ♕b6.

10.♘a4 ♕d8

Not suspecting anything.



11.♘b6!!

A combination on the theme of two trapped pieces – the rook, or in the event of 11...♕xb6 12.♗a5, the queen.

11...axb6

Forced!

12.♕xa8 ♘bd7 13.♗e2 ♘e4 14.♖d1

From this move on, White's play was flabby, and eventually he had to settle for a draw.

...½–½

With his extra exchange White ought of course to have won the game, and there were a number of plans that could have yielded that result. Here is one of them: 14.0–0 ♘df6 15.♖fc1, followed by ♗e1 and a subsequent pawn attack on the queenside. Of course if Black meets 14.0–0 by exchanging on d2, White is only too pleased.

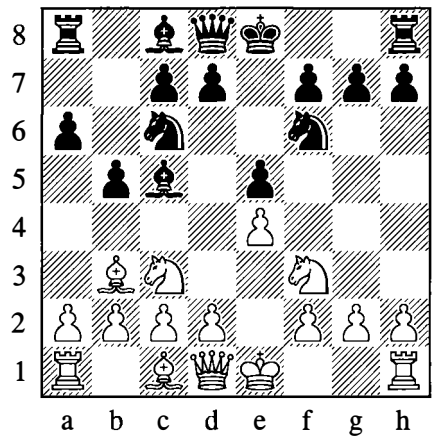
In the following sharp and lively game, the trapping of a piece was the theme that persisted almost throughout the whole process. As our final and most interesting illustration, we give the main fight in full, but only half of the game...

A. Alekhine – R. Reti

Ruy Lopez
Vienna 1922

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 b5 6.♗b3 ♗c5

This move leads to a struggle with abundant scope for combination; the storm will not abate until towards move 30, when an endgame will have taken distinct shape.



7.♘xe5

A familiar opening combination on the theme of a fork.

7...♘xe5 8.d4 ♗d6

Not at all an obligatory retreat, but in opting for it Black obviously had in mind his combinative counterattack at move 12.

An alternative, no worse and no better, was 8...♗xd4 9.♕xd4 d6, with a threat to win the white bishop by ...c5-c4.

9.dxe5

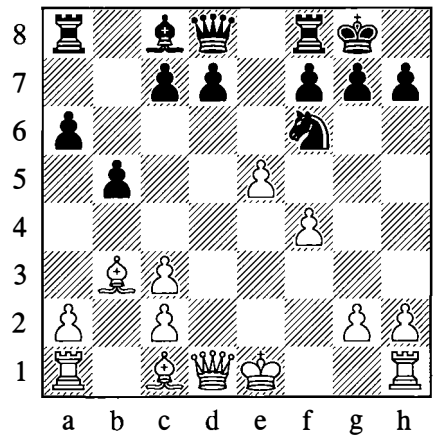
In the event of 9.f4, as is usually played in an analogous variation of the Four Knights Game, the continuation could be 9...♘c4 10.e5 0–0 11.0–0 ♗b7, with decent play for Black.

9...♗xe5 10.f4 ♗xc3† 11.bxc3 0–0

Alekhine indicates that this move is forced, as 11...♘xe4 would be met by 12.♕d5, but after 12...♕e7, a completely unclear position arises.

However, 12.♗xf7†!? would offer White chances of a plus: 12...♔xf7 13.♕d5† ♔f6 14.♕xa8 ♕e7 15.♕d5!

12.e5



12...c5!

A combinative solution to Black's problem – he starts playing to shut in the white bishop on b3.

After 12...♘e8 13.0–0 ♕e7 14.a4, Black would have an extremely unpleasant defensive task ahead of him.

13.♗a3 ♕a5! 14.0–0 ♕xa3

This was part of Alekhine's calculations: the temporary removal of his opponent's queen from the central zone of the tactical battle that has erupted. However, White still doesn't succeed in gaining anything decisive.

15.exf6 c4

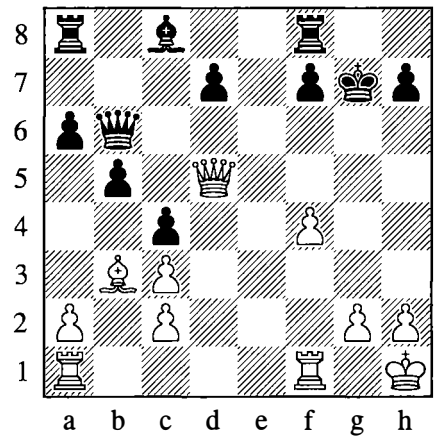
So Black's thematic aim is accomplished – the bishop is trapped.

16.♕d5 ♕a5!

Now 17.♕xa8 will be met by 17...♕b6† and then ...♗b7, trapping and winning the queen. The threat of 17.♕g5 is also parried, thanks to the same check on b6.

17.fxg7 ♕b6† 18.♔h1 ♔xg7

18...♖d8 is bad in view of 19.♗xc4 bxc4 20.♕xa8 ♗b7 21.♖ab1, and White remains the exchange up.



19.♗xc4! ♗b7!

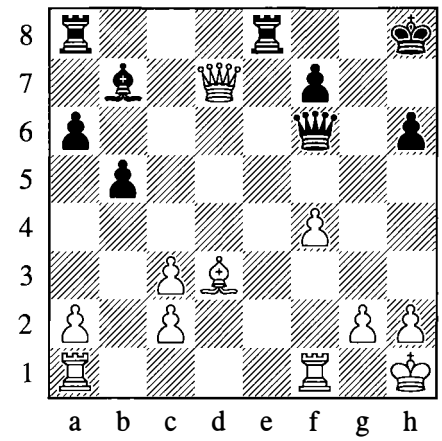
Of course not 19...bxc4, which would be met by the line indicated in the previous note.

So White has extricated his bishop from its prison and picked up a pawn in the process. Yet this is far from being the end of the matter. The superb placing of Black's bishop guarantees him the resources for successful resistance.

20.♕e5† ♕f6 21.♗d3 ♖fe8 22.♕h5

It would be a mistake to play 22.♕xf6† ♔xf6 23.♗xh7. Black then has 23...♖e2 24.♖g1 ♖h8 25.♗d3 ♖e3, with the irresistible threat of ...♖eh3. From this variation we can see what rich possibilities are inherent in the mighty position of the bishop on b7.

22...h6 23.♕g4† ♔h8 24.♕xd7



White has won another pawn – "with tempo" as well, since the bishop is attacked. For good measure he threatens to exchange queens with 25.♕d4. The scales would seem to have tipped decidedly in his favour. And yet, even in the endgame Black manages to obtain counterplay.

24...♖e7 25.♕d4 ♕xd4 26.cxd4 ♖d8 27.f5 f6 28.♖ae1 ♖g7 29.♗e4 ♖xd4 30.♗xb7 ♖xb7 31.♖e6 ♔g7 32.♖xa6 ♖c4 33.♖f3 ♖xc2

And the game ended in a draw on the 60th move.

...½–½

From the material we have used to illustrate the theme of trapping (checkmating!) a piece, are any generalizations needed? It seems to us that they are not. The theme in itself is very clear, and the methods of implementing it are so simple that by expounding them we would risk involving ourselves in needless repetitions and banal details. On the subject of trapping a rook, it may not be superfluous to note one thing: in 80 per cent of all cases this is a strategem for the opening, and the rooks that are subjected to it are usually on their starting squares. As to the queens, they most often run into danger on the queenside in cases where they penetrate deep into the opponent's camp. Such invasions with the queen therefore require particularly accurate and detailed calculation.

Chapter 20

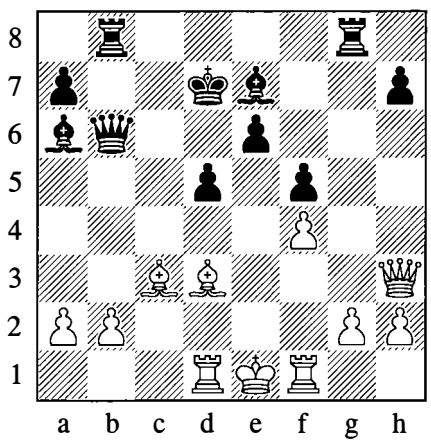
The Interference Device in Various Combinative Schemes

The device of enticing a piece onto the square where you want it, or diverting it from the defence of a square, or hampering it by means of a pin – these and many others are among the varied devices that habitually accompany the execution of a combinative idea. Among all these, a device we have singled out for separate treatment is that of *interference*, although essentially it fulfils the same role as the diverting of a square's defender. The same role, yes – but by other means. The interference device consists in placing your own piece or pawn in between the square that interests you and the square of an enemy piece, in such a way that, so to speak, you sever or shut off the enemy's line of motion – and thereby weaken the point against which your combinative attack is directed. It is among the more difficult devices and invariably involves a sacrifice; it produces a most striking effect, both outwardly and with regard to its imaginative content – and this effect is further enhanced by the suddenness of its application. Let us recall the Immortal Game between Anderssen and Kieseritzky, in which Anderssen's 19.e5 severed the a1-g7 line of communication and thereby cut the black queen off from the crucial g7 point.

Here is another simple and at the same time vivid example of the sudden and lethal role that the device of interference often plays.

A. Reggio – J. Mieses

Monte Carlo 1903



If White didn't have his queen on h3, covering the crucial e3-point, Black would give mate in two moves – 22...♕e3† 23.♗e2 ♕xe2#.

Black cannot divert the queen from the defence of e3 by straightforward means. If he plays 22...♗h4†, White doesn't take the bishop but replies 23.♔e2, and the e3-point is under control. Hence when Mieses unexpectedly employed a manoeuvre to interfere with the connection between the queen and e3, it stunned his opponent like thunder from a clear sky.

22...♖g3!

Now 23.hxg3 was unplayable in view of 23...♕e3†. White had to take the rook with his queen.

23.♕xg3 ♗h4!

White lost his queen and naturally also the game.

...0–1

An interference device was employed in the very opening stage of the following miniature.

D. Janowski – E. Schallopp

Queen's Gambit
Nuremberg 1896

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 c5 4.e3 cxd4 5.exd4 ♗g4

Most likely this lively bishop sortie is the very root of the calamities that will quickly overtake Black. His queenside is open to attack, and by additionally removing the bishop from that wing he is depriving it of important defensive resources. It would have been safest to play 5...e6 and endeavour later to blockade the d5-square.

6.♗xc4

White has not only recovered the gambit pawn but is threatening combinations based on 7.♗xf7† or 7.♘e5. The undefended bishop on g4 becomes an object of attack.

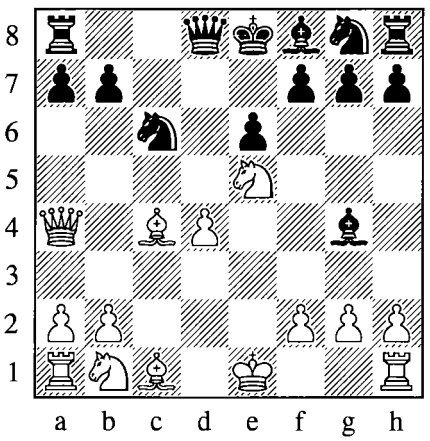
6...e6

Short of bringing the bishop back, which is possibly what Black ought to do, this move appears forced. But now the bishop is cut off for good from the queenside, which is about to come under a devastating attack.

7.♕a4† ♘c6

Black does no better with 7...♘d7 8.♘e5 ♘f6 9.♗b5 ♗f5 9.♗g5, when White is winning material.

8.♘e5



8...♕xd4?

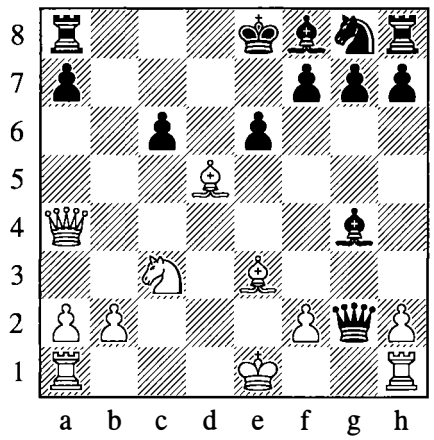
Come what may! Objectively speaking, despair is a bad counsellor.

8...♗f5? is just as bad: 9.♘xc6 ♕d7 10.♗b5 a6 11.♘c3! and Black will end up at least a piece down.

Black's best chance of complicating the struggle was 8...a6, intending 9.♘xg4 b5, or 9.♘xc6 ♕d7 10.♗b5? ♖c8!.

9.♘xc6 ♕e4† 10.♗e3 bxc6 11.♘c3 ♕xg2 12.♗d5!

Cutting the communication between the queen and the critical c6-point, and attacking the queen at the same time. A combinative catastrophe! Black could lay down his arms, but Schallopp, that passionate lover of chess, would quite often fight on until mate. The finale is easy to understand, and splendidly illustrates the beauty and power of the interference device.



12...exd5 13.♕xc6† ♔d8 14.♕xa8† ♔d7 15.♕b7† ♔e6 16.♕c6† ♗d6 17.♗f4!

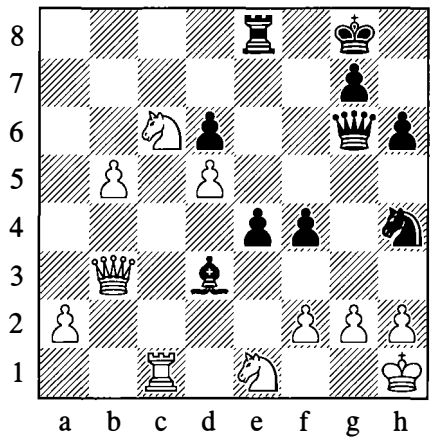
Perceiving that after 17...♕xh1† 18.♔d2 ♕xa1 he is mated in three moves, Schallopp resigned without staying for the prosaic finish after 17...f6, namely 18.♕xd6† ♔f7(f5) 19.♕xd5† (or 19.♖f1).

1–0

A combination with an interference device was executed very elegantly in the following game.

A. Ilyin-Zhenevsky – A. Kubbel

Leningrad 1925



In spite of his extra pawn, White's situation is far from easy, for his opponent is in full possession of the initiative – and given the many weaknesses in the white king's position, which represent tactical targets, Black's initiative threatens to bring about a combinative crisis. The critical point in White's position is the g2-square. Black's spearheads are directed towards that point, and the white knight on e1 is tied to its defence. White's king is shut in behind his pawns; his back rank is guarded by the rook, but the influence of that piece extends only as far as e1. Finally, the phalanx of Black's e- and f-pawns is occupying a menacing position. The combinative events unfolded as follows:

33...e3!

This is more energetic than 33...♗f1, which would be met by 34.♕h3. One of the points of Black's move is indeed to bar the white queen's path to the kingside.

However, Black had another strong continuation in 33...♕g4!, aiming to penetrate to the f1-point after 34...♕e2, or 34...f3 35.g3 ♕h3.

34.fxe3

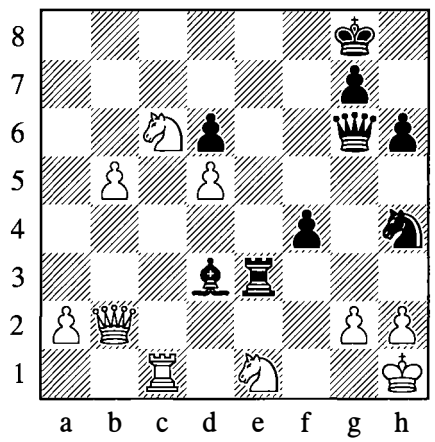
Not 34.♕xd3, as Black would win at once with the double attack 34...exf2.

There is also a simple refutation of 34.f3, namely 34...♗f1 35.♕c2 ♕g5. White cannot then prevent ...e2, cutting off his queen from the g2 point.

34...♖xe3

Now Black threatens ...♖xe1† followed by ...♕xg2#.

35.♕b2



White has brought extra defence to the g2 point, and intends ♘xd3. At the same time he has some "trappy" tactics in mind – thus, the interference move 35...♖e2? is met by 36.♕xe2! ♗xe2 37.♘e7†, and White wins. However, Black has prepared a devastating blow which settles the issue at once.

35...♗c2!!

In this case the interference is immediately decisive. The move is sudden, pretty, and the strongest in the position. (To 35...♗f1 White would only have one reply, but a strong one – 36.♔g1.) But what is White to do now? Black threatens 36...♖xe1†, which would also be his answer to 36.♕xc2. If 36.g3, then 36...♕e4†. There is no defence – White resigned.

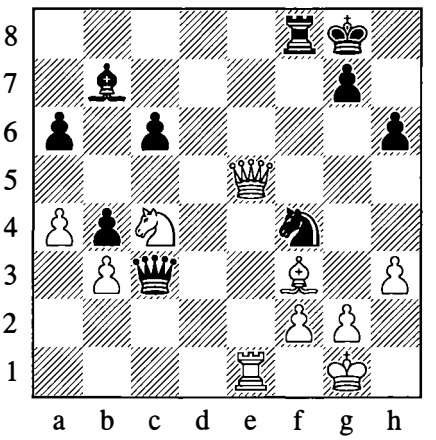
0–1

It just remains to note that in the variations supporting Black's idea (the attack on g2), we encounter not only an interference but also the devices of diverting the white rook from the first rank and drawing the queen onto the c2-square in order to win it with ...♖xe1†.

Let us look at another example, in which the interference device in a combination was applied in the ending, or at any rate in the stage of transition to that phase of the game.

G. Levenfish – I. Kan

9th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1934



White's position is better. This is mainly due to Black's constricted bishop, which has done a great deal to promote White's initiative. The light squares in Black's castled position are genuinely weak, and stimulate White to look for a combination to exploit them. The black king is half-exposed and may become the object of direct attacks, especially since all White's pieces are most harmoniously deployed. At the same time White must not ignore certain counter-threats that have arisen, or may arise, in conjunction with the half-open f-file and the strong position of Black's

queen and knight. In the event White made very subtle use of the tactical targets in his opponent's camp. There followed:

37.♘d6! ♘xh3†

Black naturally makes haste to exploit his counter-chances.

If he plays 37...♗a8 at once, the answer is 38.♕e7 with the threat of ♕xf8†!. The dangerous initiative is then entirely in White's hands, for example:

a) 38...♘g6 39.♕e6† ♔h7 40.♘e8 with a very strong attack.

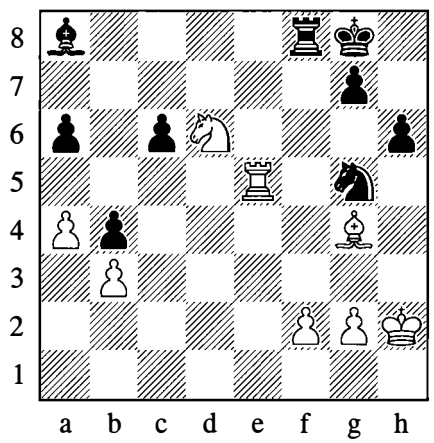
b) 38...♕f6 leads to a difficult ending for Black after 39.♕xf6 ♖xf6 40.♖e8† ♖f8 41.♖e7 ♘xh3† 42.♔f1.

38.♔h2 ♘g5

Black is making use of his combinative possibilities. If now 39.♘xb7?, then 39...♖xf3!, and the chances switch to Black's side.

39.♗g4 ♕xe5 40.♖xe5 ♗a8

The game has now entered an ending or at least is on the threshold of it, and for the moment White is even a pawn down. However, the continuation will make clear why he was endeavouring to reach this position.



41.f4 ♖xf4

Of course 41...♘f7 42.♗e6, or 41...♘h7 42.♗e6†, would lead to a quick end, but now White is able to employ an interference device.

42.♗f5

With this move which blocks the f-file, Black's rook is cut off from his king position and cannot take part in the defence against ♖e8†.

42...♖xf5?

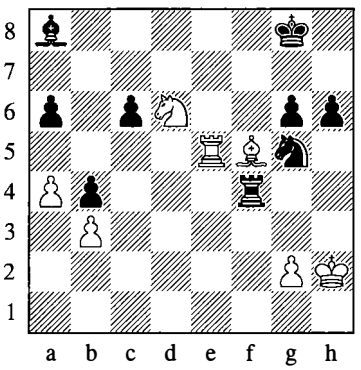
Premature capitulation.

43.♘xf5 ♔f7 44.♘d6†

And Black resigned, as he loses his bishop for good measure.

1–0

Was Black's 42nd move the fatal mistake? With the best reply, 42...g6!, could he have counted on saving himself?



After 43.♖e8† ♔g7 44.♖xa8 gxf5 45.♖xa6, White's passed a4-pawn looks extremely dangerous, but with accurate play Black can obtain counter-chances. For example: 45...c5 46.a5 ♘e4 47.♖a7† ♔g6 48.♘e8 c4 49.bxc4 b3 50.♖b7 ♖h4† 51.♔g1 f4 52.a6 ♘g3 and Black's counterplay is enough to force a draw.

In the following game, the conception and execution of the final combination relied on interference with the communications

of the pieces defending the 8th rank. We will give the game in full. White's crowning combinative idea could be viewed as the logical consequence of the initiative that he had seized almost as soon as the opening stage was over. The game was awarded the first brilliancy prize of the tournament, and deservedly attained worldwide fame.

R. Reti – E. Bogoljubow

Reti Opening
New York 1924

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5

The main conceptual thrust of the opening devised by the late talented Czech Grandmaster was directed against Black's pawn outpost on d5; this opening made its earliest appearance in the form of 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4! in 1923.

However, if in answer to 1.♘f3 Black selects a system of development without an early ...d5 (for instance a set-up on the lines of the King's Indian Defence, or the flank development of both bishops accompanied by ...c5), then sooner or later White will have to resort to the classical d2-d4. Of Black's last move, we may say that notwithstanding its positive points it does fall in with his opponent's innovative ideas, which by that time had already undergone a fair amount of testing in international tournaments.

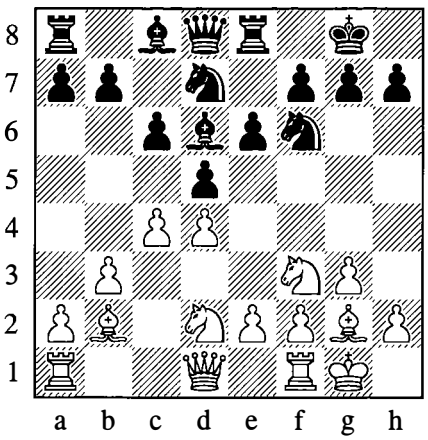
4.♗g2 ♗d6 5.0–0 0–0 6.b3 ♖e8 7.♗b2 ♘bd7 8.d4

In the present position this move probably came as a revelation, and from Black's viewpoint it was unexpected. In a game in the same tournament, as well as in earlier encounters, Reti had played 8.d3 here, offering Black the chance to set up his central pawn array with ...e6-e5 (etc.) unhindered.

8...c6

Despite the apparent strength of the central pawn triangle c6-d5-e6, White intends to show that this outward impression belies the true state of affairs.

9.♘bd2



White now threatens to play ♕c2 followed by e2-e4. The opening stage has just concluded (although Black is still a long way from having everything in order on the queenside), and the struggle is already entering a critical phase of tension. Black faces some major problems and definitely has something to think about. The first question is whether he should try to take the initiative by immediately pushing his e-pawn forward. Otherwise how is he to impede White's plan that was just mentioned? Ideas with ...b6 and ...♗b7 come to mind. In general terms, how far will e2-e4 be unpleasant to Black? What will it bring in its wake? This and much more needs to be considered. Black pondered the problem for a long time, but, to say the least, the decision he took proved far from best.

9...♘e4

This sally can be condemned for a variety of positional reasons (which, as we know, can always be disputed), but its inadequacy is demonstrated best of all in concrete terms by the continuation in the game. It is hard

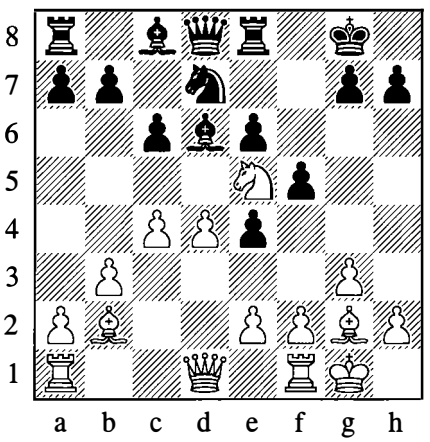
to say for sure, but Black may well have opted for this move without examining its consequences in depth, partly because the other variations he had analysed failed to satisfy him.

Indeed, 9...e5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.dxe5 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♗xe5 ♖xe5 14.♘f3 ♖e8 15.♕d3, or 15.♘d4, would leave Black in an uncomfortable situation regarding the d5-pawn.

He probably also considered 9...b6 10.♘e5, or 10.♕c2; here again, White would retain the initiative.

Other possible continuations were 9...♕e7 and 9...a5. To examine all these lines thoroughly would take too much time.

10.♘xe4 dxe4 11.♘e5 f5



12.f3! exf3 13.♗xf3

White has already started a serious battle in the centre, and Black's queenside has yet to be mobilized. This of course is one of the consequences of his 9th move.

13...♕c7

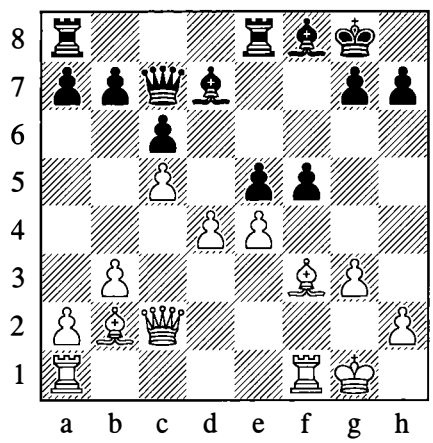
A natural attempt to make White exchange pieces himself on d7, but this adds an extra tempo to White's initiative and leaves his pawn phalanx in the centre invulnerable.

Black's defence would be easier to conduct in the case of 13...♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♗c5† 15.♔g2 ♗d7 16.e4 g6, but even so, after 17.exf5 gxf5 18.♗c1, White would have an obvious initiative.

14.♘xd7 ♗xd7 15.e4 e5

Otherwise e4-e5 followed by d4-d5 will crush Black.

16.c5 ♗f8 17.♕c2



White is now threatening both dxe5 and exf5.

17...exd4

The most stubborn defence was 17...f4, with the basic idea of 18.dxe5 fxg3 19.hxg3 ♖xe5! 20.♗xe5 ♕xe5.

18.exf5 ♖ad8 19.♗h5 ♖e5 20.♗xd4 ♖xf5

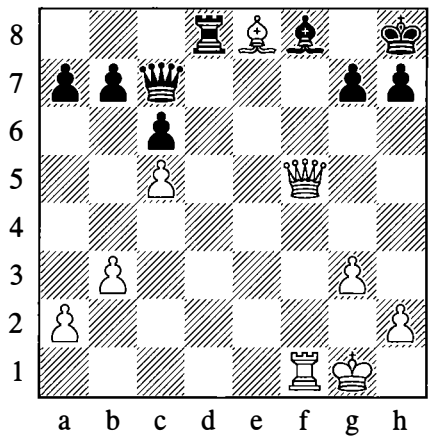
Black has regained his pawn, and manages to bring about exchanges. The main dangers might seem to be behind him; in actual fact, what lies in store for him is a combination that is as sudden as it is brilliant.

21.♖xf5 ♗xf5 22.♕xf5 ♖xd4 23.♖f1 ♖d8

The bishop has nowhere to go. On 23...♗e7, mate follows in three moves.

If 23...♕e7, then 24.♗f7† ♔h8 25.♗d5!, cutting off the rook's line of retreat to d8; on 25...♕f6, White plays 26.♕c8.

24.♗f7† ♔h8 25.♗e8!!
1–0



Nothing can defend Black against the twofold attack on f8 from the queen and rook. The strength of this attack is mathematically "raised to the second power" by the bishop's interference on the 8th rank. A magnificent example of superior harmony triumphing.

The reader will no doubt have paid attention to the fact that in nearly all our examples (with the exception of the combination in Reggio – Mieses) the piece that performed the interference was a bishop, and this cannot be considered a coincidence. A knight too is undoubtedly suited to play that role, but is called on to do so more rarely. It sometimes happens that an interference is carried out by a pawn, as in the following opening variation.

C. Schlechter – Em. Lasker

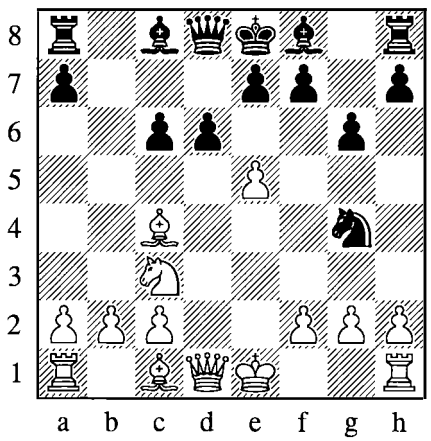
Sicilian Defence
World Championship (7), Vienna/Berlin 1910

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗c4 d6?! 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.e5!

This already is a combination. If now 8...dxe5?, then 9.♗xf7†.

8...♘g4

Black also has a difficult game after 8...♘d7 9.exd6 exd6 10.0–0 etc.



9.e6!?

The pawn severs the communication between the bishop and the g4-square.

Another valid approach is 9.exd6, to give Black a weakened pawn structure.

9...f5

9...fxe6 or 9...♗xe6 would lead to the loss of the knight.

On 9...♘h6, White plays 10.♗xh6 and 11.exf7†.

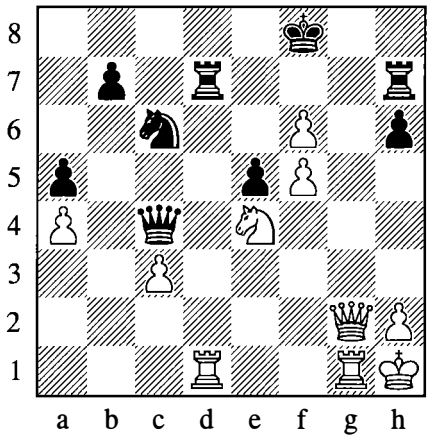
10.0–0

Now the pawn on e6 cramps Black, ensuring White a small positional advantage. A hard-fought game eventually finished in a draw.
...½–½

Here is another brief example.

P. Romanovsky – B. Koyalovich

Leningrad 1930



37.f7

The pawn fulfils the dual function of interfering with the connection between the black queen and the g8-square and upsetting the coordination of the black rooks.

Neither of the rooks can take the pawn, in view of 38.♕g8† followed by 39.f6†.

On the other hand if 37...♕xf7, then 38.♖xd7 ♕xd7 39.♕g8† and 40.f6#. Black therefore resigned.

1–0

The above modest example completes our twentieth chapter, which itself concludes our entire investigation into the methods of combinative activity – into the role and significance of combinative ideas in the creative processes of the chess struggle.

This book cannot of course include all possible forms of combination, nor was there any need to do so. Combinative activity is limitless! We saw our task as something different. Above all, it was to establish the theoretical landmarks, where possible, along the paths on which a combination develops; and then to reveal the role of combination as an inevitable companion to any creative process in the game. Finally, we wished to present combination to the reader as the source of the aesthetic principle in the art of chess – as the fundamental element of chess beauty.

However, one issue has not been addressed in either Part One or Part Two of this book; it is the question of the working of a player's mind – in terms of its elements, its logic, its basic orientation and much else that occupies him as he pores over the chessboard. It is to this issue, which affects both parts of "Middlegame Technique", that we devote our final chapter.

Chapter 21

How Players Think During the Game

In this book the reader has been presented with copious and diverse material for study, but there is one question that naturally concerns the author. For players wishing to perfect their skills, how far can the necessary assistance be supplied by examining illustrations, games, examples, schemes (and so forth) from a book, even when accompanied by the author's commentaries? Studying theoretical and creative issues in a book is one thing; applying this knowledge in practice is another.

During a game you have to solve the major and minor problems of the position independently, and you have to do so by analysing purely in the mind, without moving the pieces on the board. The strict "touch move" rule applies inexorably. Furthermore the time used in thinking is regulated by a special chess clock. Overstep the time limit, and you pay for it by losing the game – this rule too is inexorable.

Under such conditions, players are obliged to exercise their mind, their memory and their imagination to the utmost if they sit down at the board with the intention of achieving victory.

From his abundant experience as a player, and perhaps even more from methodically observing and studying the thought processes of numerous pupils and fellow contestants – players of high calibre – the author can state that during a game a chess player often thinks in an undisciplined, not to say slovenly manner. This is what gives rise to "time-trouble addiction"; because of it, psychological factors that are not fully legitimate intrude into the play; and it has some other harmful effects. On the other hand, disciplined thought plus knowledge is the fundamental guarantee of success.

It has been observed for example that players will sometimes take hasty, premature decisions in positions that require deep deliberation, and will conversely think long and hard when there is no reason to. In positions where two continuations of equal worth present themselves, it sometimes happens that instead of opting for one of them and adjusting to the decision he has taken, a player doggedly strives to ascertain which one is after all the better of the two; failing to find the answer, he wastes large amounts of effort and time on working out reasons and arguments for one line or the other. Wishing his move to be one hundred per cent thought out, he starts casting around for artificial justifications dragged forward, as they say, by the scruff of the neck, in order to reassure himself, to eliminate doubts and hesitations. Finally, satisfying himself with some paltry reason that has no direct bearing on the position, he takes his decision and essentially deludes himself. A player now and again racks his brains over which rook to move to d1 – the one from f1, or the one from a1 – and often finishes up with no solution at all.

Sometimes after an hour's deliberation a player makes a bad move as the result of a diffidence of thought which makes him skip from one theme to another in his pursuit of artificial assurances. Finally, we meet with such phenomena as mental disarray, demoralization and the like. It would

be possible to give thousands of examples of reasoning in disorder, and mental discipline collapsing to the point of sheer chaos. All this confirms that the question of how chess players think during a game is an issue of great importance.

Of course, when dealing with creative fantasy it is impossible to construct a rigid formula. In art everyone creates his own forms within the limits of his imagination and the resources of his knowledge, experience, inspiration and so on. We will therefore merely make an attempt – the first of its kind, it would appear – to ascertain at least the principal objects that engage the thoughts of a player at the chessboard, and to define as systematically as possible his constant relation with the position and the lines of play.

The basic objects to which the thinking of a skilled chess player applies itself – we will call them elements of thought – are relatively easy to outline. They are three in number. The first is the position that the players have in front of their eyes, that is, the actual arrangement of the pieces and pawns on the chessboard at a given moment. The second is the calculation of a variation to which this position directs a player's attention; and the third is the position which mentally presents itself to the player at the conclusion of that variation – we may call it the "post-variation" position. These three objects on which the mind exerts itself (three elements of thought) apply to positions of rough equilibrium, and also characterize the thinking of the player who currently holds the initiative. We call these three elements fundamental, because the player's free decision-taking has a crucial role in them.

Other mental elements have an ancillary character and are the consequence of a certain subjection to the will of the opponent; they apply to a player who is contending with his opponent's initiative and is sometimes forced to make the only move in the position to defend himself. There is no point in concerning ourselves with the thought processes where the continuation is obvious. For example in the variation of the Ruy Lopez that goes 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6, it is obvious that Black can reply with either 4...bxc6 or 4...dxc6 and will not play 4...♗c5? instead. With utterly obvious moves the mental effort is minimal, and consequently the chief elements of thought that we have identified are scarcely involved.

Nor, finally, shall we go into the question of how players think in the opening – partly because thought in this department is largely dependent on knowledge acquired from theory or special pre-game preparation, and also partly because our book is, after all, devoted not to the opening but to the middlegame.

It is perfectly clear that every move played on the board must have a motive. Even beginners, if asked why they made this or that move, will give some reasons that prompted them to settle for the continuation in question. With skilled players, decisions are based on considerations revolving round two interconnected and mutually influential factors – the position and the variations – which determine the process of the game. The mind starts working more intensely when a choice between various continuations arises and there are no sufficiently clear data for solving the problem objectively. In these cases, in addition to their previously acquired experience which is transformed into intuition, the players' subjective tastes and views come into the picture, reflecting their nature and their individual perspectives. As we know, disagreements over this or that move, and sometimes even over an entire plan, arise even among grandmasters. What one of them likes is not wholly to the liking of another, and vice versa.

The disputes at the end of the nineteenth

century between two giants of chess thought – Wilhelm Steinitz and Mikhail Chigorin – concerning the creative methods of play, are a good example of what has just been said.

Disputes are conducted about the permissible level of risk in creative experimentation; about the principles for evaluating a position; about the proportionate role of combination in the processes of the chess struggle – and much else. In chess as in every art, there is something to argue about. Uniformity cannot be expected of the mental operations of players at the board, and it would be no use looking for it even in the many models of creative achievement produced by the classic chess thinkers.

On the other hand there do exist several criteria for assessing a position objectively, such as weak and strong squares, open lines, invasions with pieces, an exposed king position, a pawn centre or other pawn configurations, and so on. Of these, a sufficient amount was said in Part One of this book and a fair amount also in Part Two. All these positional and combinative factors are respected alike by players of all stylistic nuances. The problem lies mostly in deciding what significance any of these factors have in the current situation on the board. Most often it is just here that contradictions arise and players make mistakes such as underrating or overrating specific factors. Experience and talent play a major role here.

It pays to take into account all factors that help you towards judging the position objectively when contemplating your move; yet the most important thing is to be able to extract from the multitude of details the ones which reflect, so to speak, the essence and fundamental sense of the position – its kernel, if we may put it that way. Usually there are two or three such details, not more; they stand out as the most meaningful among all the other elements relevant to your judgement; they arrest the attention of the players.

In analyses, in annotations to games, and even when discussing this or that move in conversation, we continually encounter phrases like "played against the spirit of the position" or "the continuation in the spirit of the position would be..." and so on. What then is understood by this enigmatic "spirit", of which we find such frequent mentions in chess literature?

The spirit of a position amounts to nothing other than its "point", its gist, the "main thing" about it, which has to be taken as the basis for thinking about a move or variation. Understanding the spirit of the position means more or less objectively interpreting its conditions; it means detecting the basic motivation for a move and the general task that the position presents. From this it is easy to conclude that the spirit of the position is a strategic concept, whereas a variation, for example, is a reflection of the players' tactical thinking. Playing in a manner out of keeping with the spirit of the position means committing a strategic error, and strategic errors are usually fraught with grave consequences.

The spirit of the position, finally, is equated with the landmarks in the positional environment which give direction to the thinking of the players. A player always endeavours to make a move in the spirit of the position, and having made it, he needs to be convinced that it really is so. It must not be supposed that there can only ever be one single move that corresponds to the spirit of the position. In actual fact there are plenty of situations where two or sometimes even more lines fully answer to this requirement. In such cases, the thinking of the players is in one sense even simplified by the availability of a choice, but in other ways it is made more complicated since the process of selection is often very difficult, and in pondering his move a player will start floundering in doubts and

hesitations. On this subject, a quotation from David Bronstein's book Zurich *International Chess Tournament 1953* will, we think, be useful. He writes as follows:

"The prerequisites for the art of chess are usually considered to be logic, the precise calculation of variations, and technique – with a knowledge of theory included in this last concept. There is also, however, a fourth component which is perhaps the most appealing, although it is often forgotten. I refer to intuition, or, if you like, chess fantasy. Sometimes in the course of a game you reach a position which is not to be evaluated from general principles such as pawn weaknesses, open lines, superior development and so forth, since there is imbalance in several areas, and a precise statement of accounts cannot be drawn up. An attempt to work out the variations is not always successful either. Suppose that White has six or seven different continuations, and Black has five or six answers to any of these moves. It is quite easy to understand that no genius would even get as far as the fourth move in his calculation of the variations. In these circumstances, what comes to your aid is intuition, fantasy – a force which has endowed the art of chess with the most beautiful combinations and enabled chess players to experience the true joy of creativity..."

Intuitive thinking is a particular issue that demands special elucidation, and we do not intend to dwell on it in this chapter. We have quoted David Bronstein's words by way of additional and authoritative testimony to the fact that there are positions in which even grandmasters have great difficulty reaching an objective appraisal and finding a move by logical means. Bronstein, for his part, considers that an intuitive solution to the problem is the only way out of this "impasse". However, intuition is not an element of thought, and we must look for another solution.

When considering a move or variation, we need to find a starting point, and this means relying on the spirit of the position. Interpreting a position incorrectly is no doubt better than not interpreting it at all.

Of course, the spirit of the position is not a matter to be settled as easily as it may seem on paper, and even masters of the game quite often go astray here. The spirit of the position might appear to be a highly variable quantity that needs to be reinterpreted after virtually every move. This delusion is understandable. But the point is that in setting out from the spirit of the position, you are usually already selecting a rough plan of action that will guide you until some special event in the game abruptly alters the conditions of the struggle. Naturally this special event must then be incorporated into your thinking, and accordingly new points of departure must be fixed for your future actions. In other words, your play must at least partly be planned afresh.

The following game can serve as a good illustration of all that we have said about the spirit of a position.

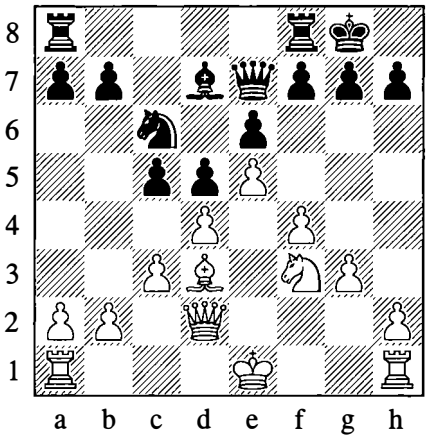
L. Forgacs – S. Tartakower

French Defence
St Petersburg 1909

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e5 ♘e4

The usual move, recommended in opening manuals, is 5...♘fd7, to which White can reply 6.h4 – the variation known to opening theory as the Alekhine-Chatard Attack.

6.♘xe4 ♗xg5 7.♘xg5 ♕xg5 8.g3 c5 9.c3 ♘c6 10.f4 ♕e7 11.♘f3 ♗d7 12.♕d2 0–0 13.♗d3



The opening stage can be considered to be over. True, White has yet to castle, but obviously he will do so in the next few moves. It is clear that once White has castled he will start preparing an attack on the kingside, where the circumstances are wholly propitious for working up his initiative.

At the moment it is Black to move, and in pondering this move he must first of all decide how to react to the events that are brewing on the kingside. Black's main chance consists of play on the queenside and partly in the centre, in connection with the tension between the pawns on c5 and d4.

It would even be possible for instance to play an immediate 13...cxd4 and answer 14.♘xd4 with 14...f6, breaking up White's e5 pawn wedge. In the event of 14.cxd4, Black could already bring about a queen exchange by 14...♕b4.

It would also be a good idea to make the preparatory move 13...♖ac8, with a view to meeting 14.0–0 by working up play with 14...cxd4 15.cxd4 ♘b4.

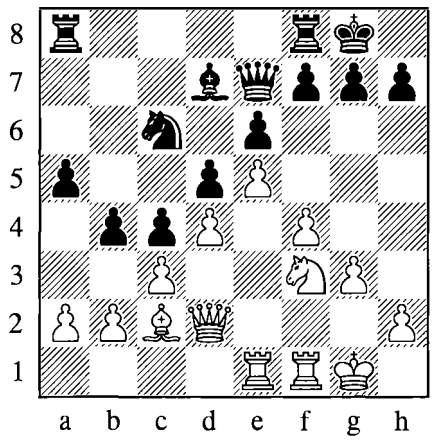
In a word, the spirit of the position should suggest to Black the moves ...cxd4, ...♖c8, ...f6 (and even ...f5) in a certain order; this would guarantee him a stable position and quite good prospects for the next phase of the game.

But what did Tartakower play? Alas, something quite out of keeping with the "spirit" of the position, namely:

13...c4?

Black undertakes a queenside pawn offensive heedless of White's territorial advantage on the kingside; he removes the pressure from the d4-pawn, closes the c-file and thus frees White's hands for a direct kingside attack. For this play contrary to the spirit of the position, Forgacs punishes his opponent mercilessly.

14.♗c2 b5 15.0–0 a5 16.♖ae1 b4



17.f5!

To White, the spirit of the position is clearly revealed. It calls for a direct, energetic attack on the black king's abode.

17...exf5 18.g4! fxg4 19.♘g5 g6?

Black had to try 19...h6 20.♘h7 and now:

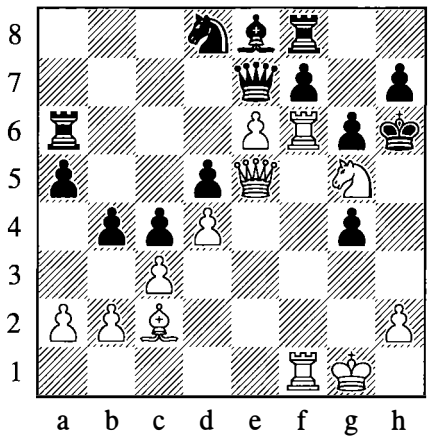
a) Not 20...♖fd8? 21.♘f6†! gxf6 22.♕xh6 f5 23.♗xf5 ♗xf5 24.♖xf5 f6 25.♖xf6 ♕h7 26.♕g5† ♔h8 27.♖h6 and White wins.

b) With 20...♕h4 Black repulses the threats to his king. He will emerge with two pawns for the exchange, and chances to resist.

20.♖f6 ♔g7 21.♖ef1 ♗e8 22.♕f4

This is more energetic than 22.♘e6†.

22...♘d8 23.e6 ♖a6 24.♕e5 ♔h6



25.♖1f5 fxe6 26.♘f7† ♕xf7 27.♖h5† ♔g7 28.♖xg6#

When White sacrificed pawns on moves 17 and 18, the calculation of variations enabled him to foresee the irresistibility of the attack he was obtaining, either along the f-file against the f7-point or else against the h6-point in the event of 19...h6 20.♘h7 ♖fd8 21.♘f6† etc. The sacrifice of the pawns was backed up by concrete variations, but Forgacs's thinking had been directed towards it by the spirit of the position, which suggested the easy vulnerability of Black's poorly defended kingside. Black's 13...c4 was clearly at odds with this spirit of the position, as the further course of the game was to confirm.

We should note that the "spirit of the position" and the "demands of the position" – another expression that people sometimes like to use – are not wholly identical concepts. The "demands" of the position are a loud voice that brooks no objection and points out the sole correct continuation or the need to steer the play down a combinative path. Of course the "demands" of the position also reflect its "spirit", but the relation between the two concepts is not one of mutual dependence. The spirit of the position is a much broader notion; it continues to offer a point of departure for the players' thinking, even when the position presents no demands.

We have already observed that to fathom the spirit of the position is not always easy. It can even happen that a player will deliberately ignore it. Such players are actually neglecting to assess the situation objectively; playing not in the spirit of the position but in that of their own moods and tastes, they tend to be severely punished by an opponent for whom the spirit of the position is the fundamental source of creative undertakings.

The strength of that illustrious Cuban player Capablanca, World Champion in his day, lay in the fact that he was always guided by the spirit of the position. No one could compare with him in the ability to grasp the gist of a position – its spirit – quickly and unerringly. Capablanca could make mistakes in calculation and choose a line that was not best, but when it came to the spirit and essence of a position, to what was most important and vital in it, he made no mistake in his judgement.

Let us look at the following game, which is instructive in the light of what has been said.

J.R. Capablanca – D. Janowski

Ruy Lopez
St Petersburg 1914

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6

Here, as is well known, White can also withdraw his bishop to a4. That retreat and the line selected by Capablanca are both fully in keeping with the spirit of the position, which allows White a choice of plans:

1) He can ground his play on his sounder and more compact pawn chain.

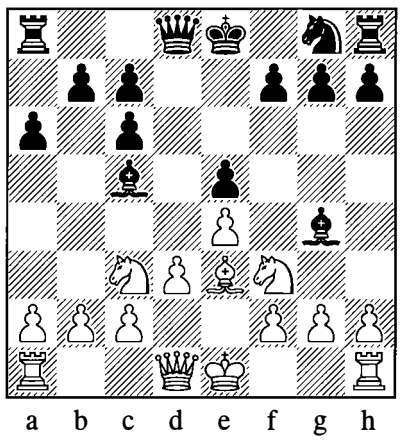
2) He can pursue a long-term policy of concentrating his forces on suitable squares and diagonals to prepare an attack on Black's castled position on the kingside.

It was this second plan that Capablanca nearly always chose in his games, and to the temperamental Janowski the capture on c6 came of course as a surprise.

4...dxc6 5.♘c3 ♗c5 6.d3

The most logical continuation, forcing Black to reckon with the "loneliness" of his e5-pawn for a long time to come.

6...♗g4 7.♗e3



7...♗xe3

This improves White's game, as he will obtain the open f-file and a stable pawn advantage in the centre. Moreover, after castling White will unpin his knight on f3 without difficulty; and he will have a clear prospect of attack against the king if Black should castle long.

The interesting question is, what reasons could Janowski have given for this exchange?

It is understandable that he was averse to such moves as 7...♗b4 or 7...♗d6, since they would mean admitting that his 5th move had been unsatisfactory, or at least not satisfactory *enough*.

On the other hand, why he rejected 7...♕e7 remains incomprehensible. Specific variations fail to clarify this question adequately, for example: 8.♘a4?! ♗xe3 9.fxe3 ♕b4† (The right way – whereas after 9...♗xf3 10.♕xf3 ♕b4† 11.♘c3 ♕xb2 12.♔d2! White has the better position, as he threatens both ♖hb1 and ♕g3, attacking the pawns on g7 and e5.) 10.c3 ♗xf3 11.gxf3 (After 11.cxb4 ♗xd1 12.♖xd1 ♘f6 Black's position is preferable, thanks to his better pawn configuration.) 11...♕e7, and by threatening ...b5 and ...♕h4†, Black secures the initiative.

The continuation 8.♗xc5 ♕xc5 9.d4?! likewise promises White nothing. Black can play either the simple 9...♗xf3 or else 9...♕b4, after which 10.dxe5 ♕xb2 turns out in his favour.

8.fxe3 ♕e7

Black doesn't want to exchange bishop for knight, but the knight is "pressing" on the e5-pawn, which Black naturally takes steps to protect. At the same time he gives himself the possibility of castling long.

The decision Black has taken is in contradiction to the spirit of this position. On the queenside his king will be in an unsafe place. In addition his queen move compels him to develop his knight in a slow and awkward manner, by way of the flank square h6. A third point is that in the situation arising after five more moves, Black will have to exchange on f3 after all, to prevent the white king's knight from participating in the attack.

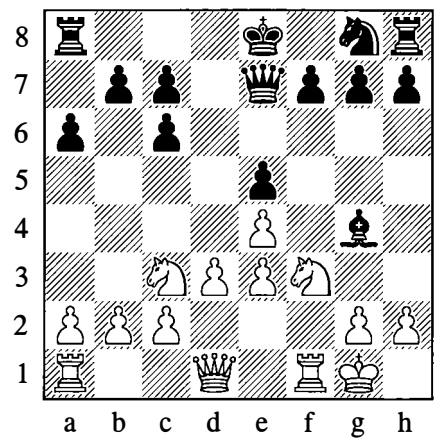
Thus Janowski has committed a serious error in his assessment of the position that will arise after he castles queenside.

At this point the continuation in the spirit of the position is 8...f6; there can follow 9.0–0 ♘e7 10.♕e1 0–0 11.♕g3 ♗e6 12.♘h4 ♕d7 13.♖f2 ♔h8 14.♖af1 c5 15.♘f5 ♘g8, and Black's defensive set-up is completely sound. After ...♖ad8 he will be able to go into action himself, with ...c5-c4.

It is quite clear that the reason for Black's mistaken plan was that he didn't look deeply enough into the situation arising from move seven; he skipped over it with a superficial glance, without examining the concrete variations.

There is a dangerous delusion that only forced variations can be calculated. That is far from being the case. When working out a variation, we consider those of our opponent's replies which in our view correspond to the spirit of the position – those which, if not the best, are good natural moves. Certainly there do exist positions where going into variations is very difficult, owing to the multitude of possibilities on the opponent's side – difficult, but possible all the same; and anyway such positions are in a minority. In the present case, Janowski evidently didn't investigate the position in particularly concrete terms; at any rate, he failed even to foresee White's eleventh move, and with it Capablanca's whole plan of attack.

9. 0–0



9...0–0–0?

Played entirely against the spirit of the position! After all, when the players castle on opposite sides, one of the best and surest ways to seize the initiative is with a pawn attack (pawn storm!) against the position of the king. It is visible to the naked eye that all the prerequisites for such an attack are available to White on the queenside, while Black has no chances whatever for a similar attack on the other wing – where White has a significant control of space.

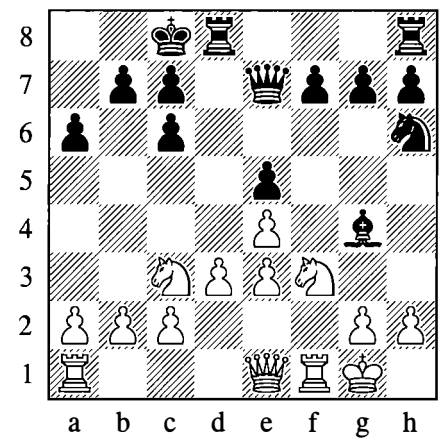
Therefore even now Black ought to adhere to the plan already mentioned, and play 9...f6, followed by ...♘h6 and ...0–0.

10.♕e1!

A final preparatory move. The knight is unpinned, and the queen occupies a square from which it can be transferred to either wing.

10...♘h6?

Black fails to see the danger, although by this stage he is probably no longer able to save the game. He could strengthen his defence by bringing the knight via f6 and d7 to b8. It would then be fortifying the pawns on a6 and c6, against which White's attack will be directed.



11.♖b1!!

The white a- and b-pawns are about to begin storming Black's weakly defended king position. The difficulty of the defence is aggravated by the advanced position of the

pawns on a6 and c6. The white b-pawn will come into contact with them after just three more moves.

11...f6 12.b4 ♘f7

He should play 12...♗e6 to guard the d5-square against invasion by the white knight, seeing that the c6-pawn will soon be eliminated.

13.a4 ♗xf3

From now on, Black will be subjected to the will of his opponent; but this exchange, which has the aim of diverting the white rook from the queenside, is almost obligatory.

In the event of 13...♗e6, White would achieve the opening of the b-file after 14.b5 cxb5 15.axb5 a5 16.b6 (if 16...c6, then 17.♘a4 and ♕xa5).

14.♖xf3 b6

Panov indicated 14...b5, followed by ...♔b7 and ...♖a8, as the relatively best defence.

15.b5 cxb5 16.axb5 a5

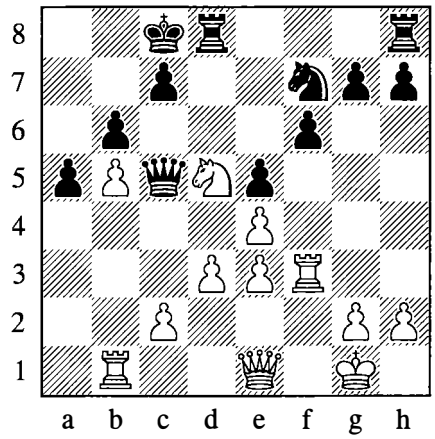
By blocking the b-pawn Black has managed to avoid the opening of lines, but the initiative remains in White's hands – he has acquired a superb outpost for his knight on d5.

It is under cover of this outpost that White will carry out the decisive attack with his d- and c-pawns.

17.♘d5 ♕c5

Black tries to halt the progress of the d-pawn, but these efforts are futile – he is able to delay the advance of White's centre for a short while only.

As White has not yet bolstered his knight's position with c2-c4, Black's best chance was to sacrifice the exchange with 17...♖xd5 18.exd5 e4.



18.c4 ♘g5 19.♖f2 ♘e6 20.♕c3 ♖d7 21.♖d1 ♔b7

Black cannot hold back White's pawn offensive, and this testifies to the hopelessness of his position. Still, his king was not forced to place itself in the way of a pawn's fork (c4-c5-c6†).

But then even after 21...♖e8, White executes a fine winning combination: 22.d4 exd4 23.exd4 ♕d6 24.c5! bxc5 25.♕xa5 ♔b7 26.♖a2 ♖b8 27.♕a7† ♔c8 28.♖da1, with the deadly threat of ♕xb8†. If 28...♖xb5, then 29.♕a8† ♖b8 30.♖b2!.

22.d4 ♕d6 23.♖c2 exd4 24.exd4 ♘f4 25.c5 ♘xd5

Black has eliminated the terrible knight, but... at the cost of a rook.

26.exd5 ♕xd5 27.c6† ♔b8 28.cxd7 ♕xd7 29.d5 ♖e8 30.d6 cxd6 31.♕c6
1–0

In this game, Capablanca only once had to engage in what we have called the first element of chess thought, which amounts to thinking about the "spirit" of the position. This occurred after Black's ninth move, 9...0–0–0.

During the rest of the game, his mind was chiefly immersed in the second "element" –

variations. The third element – the assessment of a position at the end of a variation – probably occupied him after calculating the move 15.b5, since after 16...a5 it was important for him to foresee the ways in which the attack would develop (17.♘d5!).

The first thing a player's mind dwells on when pondering a move is, then, the identification of the "main thing" in the position, its heart, its spirit – the initial impulse for a move or variation.

Sometimes, in more lucid situations, the spirit of the position is detected quickly, with no great inward hesitations. Often, however – especially when the task is to formulate a game plan – the position will demand a dynamic assessment. This means a more or less deep investigation into the variations which arise, as it were, from the spirit of the position on the board, and which at the same time correct the player's original interpretation of it.

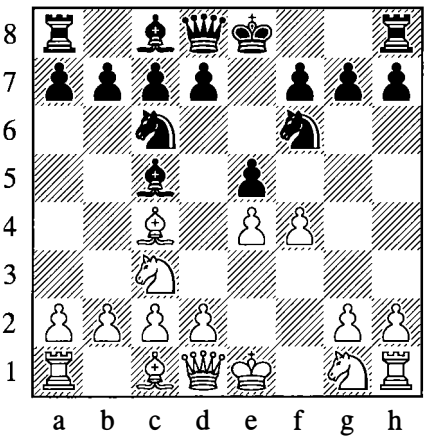
A variation often demands immense mental exertion. Sometimes a state of conflict arises, in which the examination of variations indicates that the static assessment contained errors – that the essence or spirit of the position was perceived incorrectly. Yet by no means all players are prepared to admit this; they will sometimes prefer to play at variance with the spirit of the position, rather than go back to the process of interpreting it. The existence of such conflicts almost always comes to light in post-mortem analysis.

How does the work of scrutinizing a variation proceed? The variation, so to speak, draws the mind after it as it develops. The mental effort relaxes if the variation leads to an adequate result, that is, if the player likes and is satisfied with the position in which the variation culminates.

P. Keres – D. Bronstein

Vienna Game
Candidates' Tournament, Amsterdam 1956

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.f4 ♗c5



The question that arises here for White is whether to steer the game back into the channels of the King's Gambit with 5.♘f3, or to remove the e5-pawn and thus create the threat to form a powerful centre after d2-d4. White decided on the latter path, perhaps without surveying the resulting variations in a sufficiently concrete manner. There followed:

5.fxe5 ♘xe5

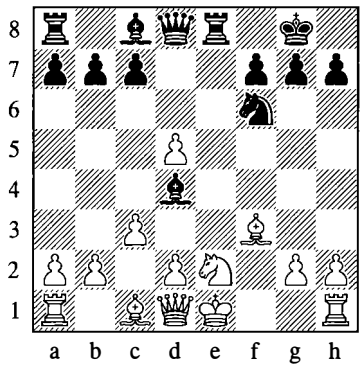
Now a very tense moment in the struggle arrives, since the correct decision here can only be found by means of a profound dynamic assessment, that is, by examining a complex of variations.

6.♗b3

At one time it was thought that by playing 6.♗e2, with the threat of d2-d4, White could obtain the better position – but can we agree with such a verdict without illuminating this extremely sharp situation dynamically? The truth of the matter is that White made the correct move.

From a purely positional standpoint, the continuation 6.d4 ♘xc4 7.dxc5 0–0 would not be very welcome to White. True, it would be fairly tranquil, but the quest for tranquillity in such situations is by no means to everyone's satisfaction.

Black's reply to 6.♗e2 would be 6...♗d4!, and Keres will undoubtedly have seen the variation 7.♘f3 ♘xf3† 8.♗xf3 d5 9.exd5 0–0. Here it is not easy for White to safeguard his king, for example: 10.♘e2 ♖e8 11.c3



11...♘e4! 12.cxd4 ♕h4† 13.g3 ♘xg3 14.hxg3 ♕xg3† 15.♔f1 ♕xf3†, and Black wins.

If White answers 11...♘e4 with 12.♗xe4, Black plays 12...♕h4†.

Keres will have had to work all this out when pondering his sixth move. He would have done better to undertake a dynamic investigation into the position before playing move five. Had he done so, that move would most likely have been different.

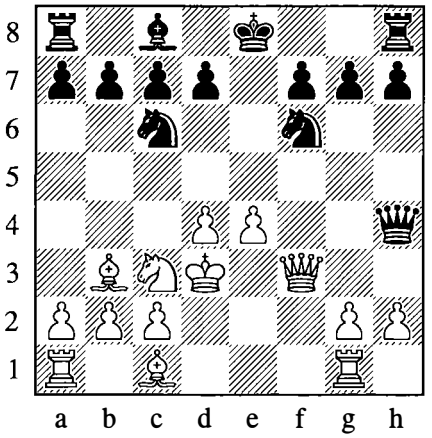
6...♗xg1 7.♖xg1 ♘g4 8.d4

This move is what the position demands, but it is made with gritted teeth.

8...♕h4† 9.♔d2

White consents, or rather is forced to consent, to the draw that would come about by 9...♕f2† 10.♘e2 ♕e3† 11.♔e1 ♕f2†. Black on the other hand, taking the precarious situation of White's king into account, considers that the spirit of the position demands more from him.

9...♘c6 10.♕f3 ♘f6 11.♔d3



11...b6

It seems to me that the policy in the spirit of the position was not placid development but the immediate attempt to profit from White's dangerous king position by 11...♘b4†. To work out the dozens of variations after 12.♔c4 a5, or 12.♔e2 d5 13.♕f4 ♕h5†, was definitely not humanly possible when time shortage was already making itself felt. Of course Black might go wrong in conducting the attack, especially in time trouble, and lose the game. Yet such considerations ought not to encroach on a chess player's thinking and dominate it.

12.♗e3

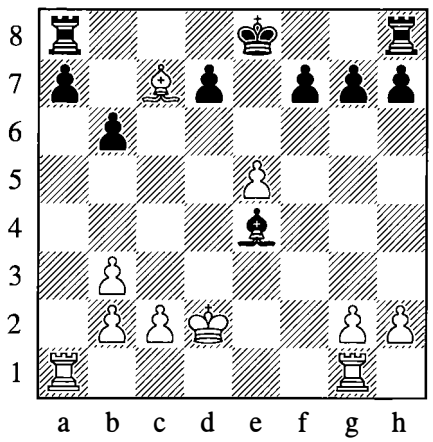
Now of course White's position is more secure.

12...♗b7 13.♕f4

White could play more ambitiously with 13.♖ae1. Black should not then be tempted by 13...♘b4† 14.♔d2 ♗xe4? 15.♗f4 d5, after which White wins by continuing with 16.♗xd5, or 16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.♖xe4†.

Instead, either 13...0–0 or 13...0–0–0 would lead to a tense battle.

13...♗a6† 14.♔d2 ♕xf4 15.♗xf4 ♘xd4 16.♗xc7 ♘xb3† 17.axb3 ♗b7 18.e5 ♘e4† 19.♘xe4 ♗xe4



And the game was eventually drawn.
½–½

Now a few words about how a variation comes into being. It is born with its first move, but if it terminates there, it is to some extent faulty.

There should be no one-move variations. Based on the spirit of the position, some reply or other can be anticipated from the opposing side; this being so, one more move of your own can be envisaged, and already a two-move variation comes into being. If a player succeeds in anticipating a reply to his second move with some measure of probability, it will be a matter of a three-move variation. In this way variations many moves long, which may not be combinations, are sometimes devised.

The calculation of a variation usually stops when a reply from the opponent cannot be foreseen with even a small degree of probability, or when so many ramifications appear that embracing them mentally is simply too difficult.

If in your deliberations you reach a position that you judge to be in your favour, then this too of course supplies a reason to stop calculating the variation any further and start carrying it out on the board.

Let us look at the following brief game, which is instructive from the point of view of the consequences brought on by a mistake in the calculation of a variation.

M. Filip – L. Szabo

King's Indian Defence
Candidates' Tournament, Amsterdam 1956

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.d4 ♗g7 5.f4 c5 6.d5 0–0 7.♘f3 e6 8.♗e2 exd5 9.exd5

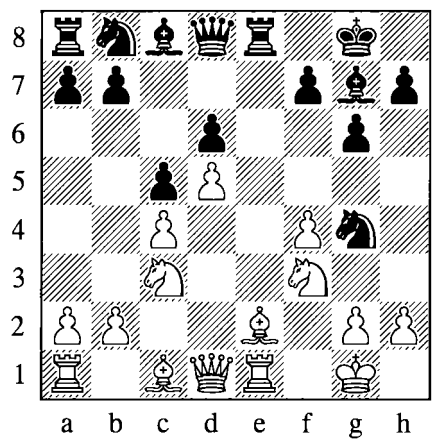
Practice and the present-day theory of this old variation recommend 9.cxd5.

9...♖e8 10.0–0 ♘g4

Sensing the weakness of the dark squares d4 and e3 (the "spirit" of the position), Szabo wishes to "take the bull by the horns" – and launches an impetuous attack on White's dark-square territory in the centre. Black's misfortune, however, is that his calculation of the variations proves inaccurate.

The other main continuation here is 10...♗f5.

11.♖e1



11...♗d4†?

A grave error of calculation. Clearly White has seen the bishop check on d4, and it is

obvious that he has carefully considered its consequences. Black should have taken this side of the matter into account, instead of hoping without any justification that his 13th move had been missed by his opponent.

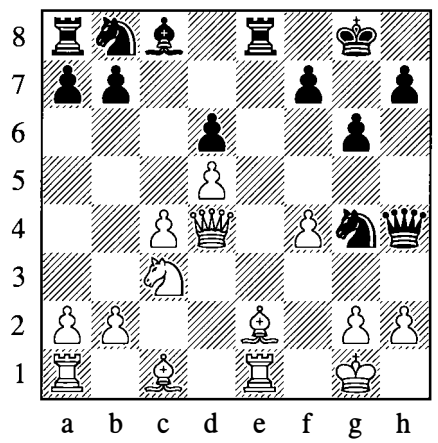
By continuing 11...♘h6, with the aim of getting the knight to d4, Black could still feel more or less at ease. A good answer to 12.♗d3 would be 12...♗f5.

12.♘xd4 cxd4 13.♕xd4

This cold-blooded capture of the sacrificed pawn probably astonished or confused Szabo. Perhaps he had assumed that Filip would go in for 13.♘b5?, but then 13...♕h4 *is* very strong, for example 14.h3 ♘f2 15.♕d2 ♘xh3†, and Black's attack is winning.

13...♕h4

The refutation of 13...♘xh2 would be 14.f5.



14.♗d2 ♕xh2† 15.♔f1

Black has not lost any material, but White is threatening 16.♗xg4.

15...♘a6 16.♗xg4 ♗xg4 17.♘e4 ♖xe4 18.♖xe4 ♘c5 19.♖e3!
1–0

If 19...♕h1†, then 20.♔f2 ♕xa1 21.♗c3.

A variation is enacted on the chessboard during the progress of a game, whereas the "spirit of the position" is merely reflected in the minds of the players. A game of chess from beginning to end consists of variations, and the main part of a player's imaginative thinking is accordingly concentrated on them; it creates them and carries them out on the board. Unfortunately, from all the examples we have examined, we can see that the variations actually played in the game merely illustrate a minor portion of the players' creative efforts. A good many of the variations that were thought about remain the secret of the players themselves, unless they later find expression in analytical studies and annotations. But then, even in print, it is hard to express the full content of the players' thought. To pursue that aim, we would need to write an entire book about every game. Variations demand the greatest mental exertion, and 80-90 per cent of the players' available time is spent on them.

There are players who don't like going deeply into variations; they basically content themselves with one-move or at most two-move lines. With this approach to chess, a player is inevitably passing over a host of treasures and creative possibilities concealed in the multifarious positions of the middlegame. The games of this kind of player will always be of inferior worth; they will never attract the attention of the millions of lovers of the game of chess.

A variation or variations can sometimes take the players a very long way in their thinking. The new position arising from a variation is sometimes many moves distant from the position currently on the board. We know of cases where the two positions were separated by 15 moves and more.

Obviously the new position that presents itself to the mind's eye is also in need of some assessment. The players start carrying the variation out on the board if the verdict

is relatively satisfactory to both of them. This happens when they both like the new position subjectively – which may be when one of them has made a mistake in his assessment, by underrating or overrating some individual factors. Finally, the assessment may be a very complex affair, incorporating a good many plus and minus points for both sides. There are also cases where the verdict is decisively influenced by the players' creative tastes.

In the case of a combination, whether he likes it or not, the player in the subordinate role is forced to head for a position that actually dissatisfies him.

The simplest cases of *divergent* assessments occur in the many games where one player sacrifices material (usually one or two pawns – see the Forgacs – Tartakower game above), reckoning that the resulting positional assets will fully compensate for the material deficit. The other player accepts the sacrifice on the opposite assumption, namely that his opponent will not obtain due positional compensation for the losses incurred. It quite often happens that both opponents suffer from delusions, and the question as to which side is objectively in the right is only settled by the further course of the game or by deep post-mortem analysis of the critical juncture.

To denote positions that come about at the conclusion of a variation, we have used the term "post-variation positions." The question arises as to what relation exists between the spirit of the position and a post-variation assessment. At first sight the two concepts are wholly identical, but in reality this is not quite the case. The assessment of a post-variation position is usually wider-ranging but more superficial in its inner content.

The spirit of a position is its kernel, the "main thing" about it. A number of secondary features of a position are disregarded when defining its spirit. The spirit of the current position directs the mind along the creative path of devising variations. A post-variation position, on the contrary, concludes a variation and sometimes the game. Speaking figuratively, we may say that if the spirit of the current position is the source of a variation, the post-variation position represents the lower reaches of the watercourse. It is not the spirit of the present position but the assessment of the post-variation position that helps to give variations their purpose. The spirit of the present position is a reference point; the post-variation assessment is a conclusion, the result of a great intensive labour of thought. The post-variation position ceases to *be* one when it is reached on the board; at that stage the players are already striving to define its sense – the main thing about it, its spirit – in their contemplation of future developments. In this way each position passes twice, so to speak, through the players' minds – once as the creative outcome of a thought process, once as a new point of departure.

The quantity of post-variation positions that are evaluated in the course of one game varies. They will usually be linked to each other by logical threads (with the spirit of the position supplying the knots). Hence when mentally examining a number of such positions, the players will not be proceeding by leaps, confronting a totally new position each time; they will be following a logical, fluid sequence.

A few illustrations will elaborate what we have said.

A. Alekhine – S. Tarrasch

Giuoco Piano
Mannheim 1914

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♕e7 5.d4 ♗b6 6.0–0 d6 7.a4

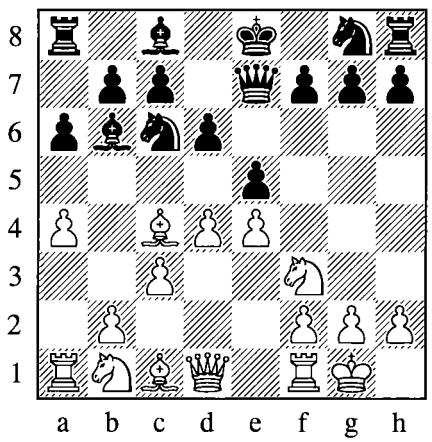
The (technical) aim of this move is to induce Black to advance his own a-pawn, with the result that after ♗c1-e3 the exchange on e3 will be virtually forced.

At the moment White is threatening to win material after 8.d5 ♘a5 9.♗d3, or 8.a5 ♘xa5 (8...♗xa5 9.d5) 9.♖xa5 ♗xa5 10.♕a4†.

7...a6

Both opponents have happily solved their opening problems in accordance with the spirit of the Giuoco Piano. Both White and Black have fully satisfactory development, and the centre is stable. This is the first "post-variation" position in the present game. True, the players have reached it not by dint of imagination and calculation, but through their knowledge of Giuoco Piano theory. In this quiet opening White can have no great aspirations, and Black usually succeeds in maintaining the balance.

This is an example of how both sides, aiming to reach a particular position (in this case a theoretical one), decide on one and the same variation.



8.♗e3

On the one hand White is completing his mobilization, while on the other he is pursuing a specific scheme to improve the situation on the kingside. He envisages the continuation 9.d5 ♘d8 10.a5 ♗xe3 (or 10...♗a7 11.♗xa7 ♖xa7, and the black rook is misplaced) 11.fxe3. This "post-variation" position might have appealed to White, but Black's eighth move is missing from the variation itself – and as we shall see, this omission does have a certain significance.

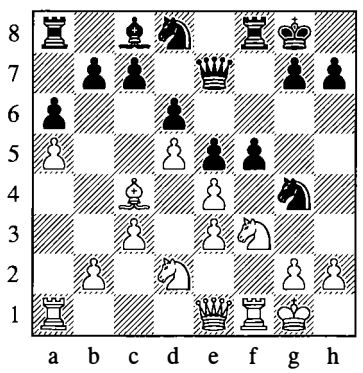
8...♗g4

Alekhine faults this move, but the reasons for his criticism (weakening of the pawn on b7) are specious.

Possibly Tarrasch reckoned that the closure of the centre was in his favour and hence induced the move 9.d5 which White had in mind anyway. We have here a case of divergence in the assessment of a position. Black forces a move that White considers useful to himself. Tarrasch can and should be blamed for confining himself to pure statics, relying on his 40 years of experience, rather than taking pains to elucidate the position dynamically. But Alekhine can be blamed for almost the same thing. The variation initiated by 8.♗e3 should have been investigated further.

Given that Alekhine himself censured the move Black played, he ought to have been expecting 8...♘f6. Let us continue the variation: 9.♘bd2 0–0 10.d5 ♘d8 11.a5 ♗xe3 12.fxe3 ♘g4 13.♕e1 f5, and Black's position is quite promising.

Here is this post-variation position, which thanks to Tarrasch's "error", never came about:



The game might, for example, continue as follows: 14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.♘h4 ♗d7 16.♖xf8† ♕xf8 17.♕g3, and although White's pieces

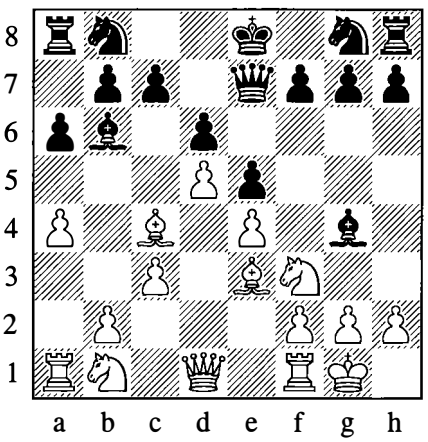
are somewhat more actively placed, there are more vulnerable points in his position than in Black's.

If Tarrasch *had* played 8...♘f6, we may surmise that after 9.♘bd2 0–0 10.d5 ♘d8 Alekhine would have preferred the simple 11.h3 rather than 11.a5.

9.d5 ♘b8

A natural retreat, but however strange it may seem, the black knight will not find a convenient post for itself afterwards.

Black would have shown more foresight by playing 9...♘d8, without fear of an attack on the b6-pawn after 10.♗xb6 cxb6; the pawn is easy to defend.



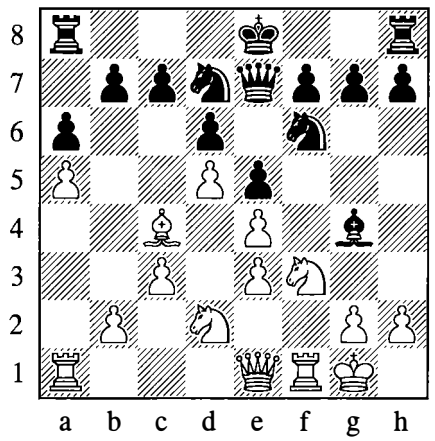
10.a5 ♗xe3

Nor would 10...♗a7 11.♗xa7 ♖xa7 be all that bad for Black. Outwardly the rook's position on a7 has little aesthetic appeal, and Black will have to lose a tempo (in due course) to return this rook to a8. In recompense for this one tempo, however, Black will have avoided giving White play on the f-file; and in that same file he will have an object of attack of his own, in the shape of the f4-point.

11.fxe3 ♘f6

Natural, but it fails to respond to the spirit of the position. The closed central structure, which Black himself brought about, requires him to play dynamically with ...f5. He could begin this action either immediately or after 11...♘h6. Instead he simply plays a move to finish his development. Such play based on one-move variations ought sooner or later to be punished.

12.♘bd2 ♘bd7 13.♕e1



Black is in a difficult situation. However, if he had divined the essence of the position and managed to subordinate his subsequent play to it, he would still have been able to contend with his difficulties.

The weak point in White's position is the e4-pawn. It is against that pawn that Black's minor pieces should be directing their attacks. On the other hand Black must secure the f5-square against invasion by a white knight. To that end ...g6 would not be suitable, as it would be dangerous to weaken f6; utilizing the open f-file, White could assail that square with all his major pieces. The spirit of the present position is characterized by all these considerations taken together. They ought to lead Black to the conclusion that his bishop must be transferred to g6. Consequently the correct move here, in accordance with the spirit of the position, is 13...♗h5!.

A variation that could arise is 14.♘h4 ♗g6!

15.♘f5 (of course, 15.♘xg6 hxg6 or 15...fxg6 would only favour Black) 15...♗xf5 16.♖xf5 ♘g4! 17.♕g3 g6 18.♖f3 h5 19.h3 ♘h6, and Black's position is completely sound.

If White doesn't play 14.♘h4, Black brings his bishop to g6 all the same, and White starts to have worries about the defence of his e4-pawn. In addition, the bishop on g6 provides excellent defence for Black's king position.

13...♘c5?

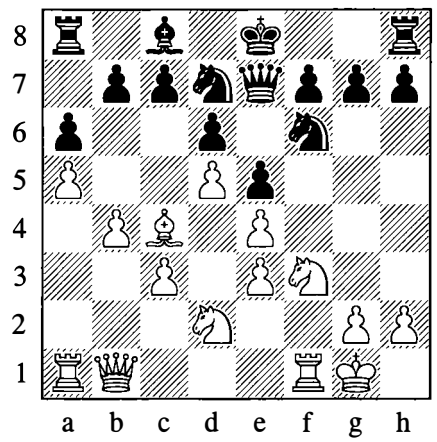
A momentary attack. After one more move, the knight will be ignominiously driven back.

14.♕b1 ♗c8?

Clearly, even now Black should play 14...♗h5.

The bishop departs into voluntary imprisonment, from which it is not destined to emerge for the rest of the game – while locking up the rook for good measure.

15.b4 ♘d7



When Tarrasch made his 13th move, this position at the end of the three-move variation could surely not have been to his liking? Alekhine surely *must* have liked it.

16.♘h4

See the final paragraph in the note to move 21.

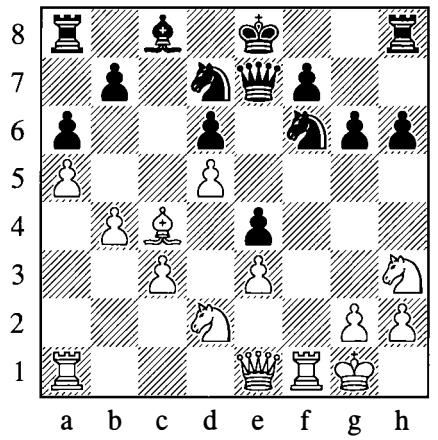
16...g6 17.♕e1 c6 18.♘f3 cxd5 19.exd5

Capturing with 19.♗xd5 might seem attractive, if it were not for 19...♘xd5 20.exd5 f5, increasing Black's influence in the centre.

19...e4

Otherwise the queenside pieces cannot be freed from their prison.

20.♘g5 h6 21.♘h3



21...♕e5?

Incomprehensible! Tarrasch doesn't take his final opportunity to bring his queenside into play. From now until the end of the game, a rook, bishop and knight – a large force, that is – will remain passive witnesses to the catastrophe. What variations had Tarrasch calculated when he made his queen move? Probably none at all. It would have been enough to take a look at the three-move variation that occurred in the game, and flee in any direction from the position it promised.

Yet after 21...♘e5, the struggle could still have taken on a fairly stubborn character. Alekhine gives this variation: 22.♘f4 ♗f5 23.h3 h5 24.♗b3 ♖c8 25.c4, followed by ♘e2-d4. He asserts that White then has the better position but no obvious possibility of exploiting it quickly.

The matter is by no means so simple. Black could for instance answer 25...h4, and if 26.♘e2 then 26...♘d3 27.♕b1 ♘h5. He would then be working up an initiative.

It would appear that Alekhine's play earlier had been deficient in concrete thinking, when he failed to anticipate the undermining move 17...c6. In place of 16.♘h4, which looks rather too direct, wouldn't it have been better to play 16.♗d3, so as to meet 16...c6 with 17.c4, preventing Black's queenside pieces from freeing themselves?

22.♖c1 ♘g4

Another one-move variation.

23.♘f4 g5?!

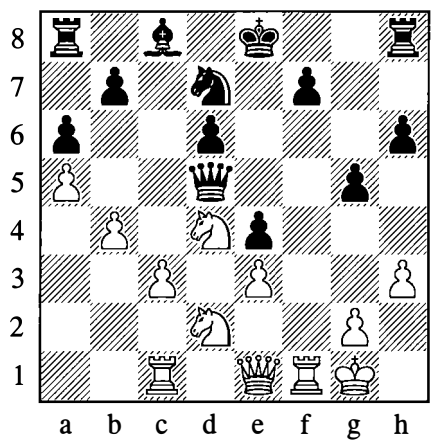
Now White will additionally make use of the f5-point. Black's aim of playing to win the d5-pawn is just as futile as many more of Tarrasch's ideas in this game.

23...♕e7, freeing the e5-square for a knight (and admitting the error of his 21st move), would allow Black to struggle on.

24.h3 ♘gf6

24...gxf4 25.exf4 followed by 26.hxg4 is also hopeless for Black.

25.♘e2 ♘xd5 26.♗xd5 ♕xd5 27.♘d4



27...♕e5

Black cannot play 27...♘e5 on account of 28.c4 – this is his misfortune.

On 27...♘f8, Alekhine had in mind 28.♕e2 threatening ♘c4, after which Black should lose.

28.♘c4 ♕d5 29.♘f5! ♔f8 30.♘xd6 ♖h7 31.♖d1 ♕c6 32.♖d4 b5 33.axb6 ♗b7 34.♘a5
1–0

A stormy finish for such an unpretentious opening as the Giuoco Piano.

Now, one more fairly short game.

A. Rubinstein – S. Tartakower

Budapest Gambit
Bad Kissingen 1928

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.♗f4

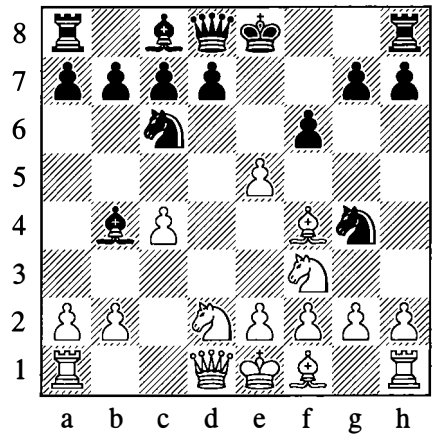
Rubinstein liked this move, whereas Alekhine conducted his attacks by means of 4.e4 ♘xe5 5.f4. However, White's energetic pawn advance in the latter variation lost much of its force when Black armed himself with the following continuation: 5...♘ec6 6.♗e3 ♘a6! 7.♘c3 ♗c5 8.♕d2 d6 9.♘f3 0–0 10.♗d3 ♗xe3 11.♕xe3 ♘c5 with a good game. In Rudakovsky – Ratner, 14th USSR Championship, Moscow 1945, there followed 12.♗c2 ♘b4 13.0–0–0 ♘xc2 14.♔xc2 ♖e8 15.♖he1 ♗d7 16.e5 b6 17.♔c1 dxe5 18.fxe5 ♕c8 19.♕g5 h6 20.♕g3 ♕a6 21.♖d4 ♗f5, and Black obtained a very dangerous attack.

4...♗b4† 5.♘d2 ♘c6 6.♘gf3 f6

The principal continuation is to win the pawn back by 6...♕e7 7.e3 ♘gxe5. After 8.♗e2 0–0 9.0–0, White answers 9...d6 with 10.♘b3 followed by a2-a3.

A more acceptable line for Black is probably 9...♗xd2 10.♕xd2 d6.

After the present game Rubinstein continued to prefer White, but it seems that his main reason for this judgement lay in the white "bishop pair".



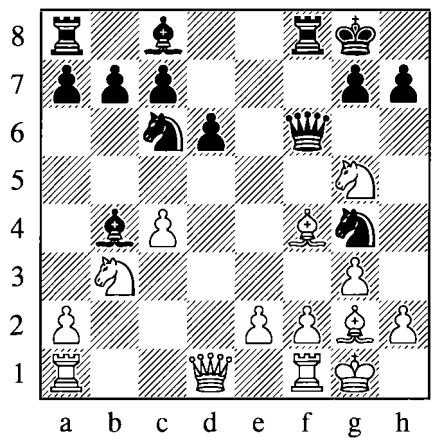
7.exf6 ♕xf6 8.g3 ♕xb2 9.♗g2 d6 10.0–0 0–0

Black plays this so that he can finally devote himself to the middlegame in earnest – which you are not recommended to do with your king in the centre.

11.♘b3!

Rubinstein puts Black's bishop on b4 in an awkward situation. For example, 11...♗c3 is not playable in view of 12.♗c1.

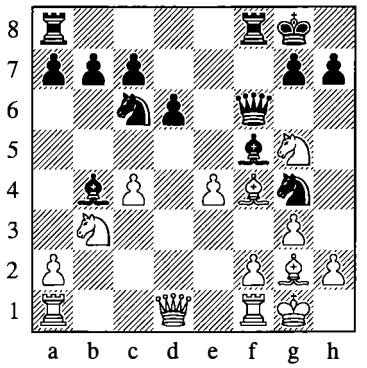
11...♕f6 12.♘g5



12...h6?!

Not 12...♗c3 on account of 13.♘e4, but there is hardly any point in driving the knight away to a square where it wants to go anyway, and where indeed it will be none too pleasantly placed from Black's point of view.

Black needed to think about 12...♗f5. After 13.e4, there are these possibilities:



a) 13...♗d7 is dangerous in view of 14.e5!, and whichever knight Black takes the pawn with, White finally emerges with a material plus. For instance:

a1) 14...♘gxe5 15.a3 ♗c5 16.♘xc5 dxc5 17.♗d5† ♔h8 18.♘xh7!

a2) 14...♘cxe5 15.h3 ♘h6 16.a3 ♗c5 17.♘e4!, winning either the knight on e5 or the bishop on d7.

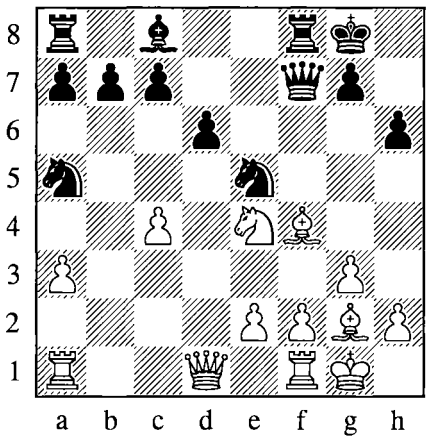
b) 13...h6 14.exf5 hxg5 15.♗d5† ♔h8 16.♗xd6 cxd6 (or 16...♗xd6) 17.♕xg4 ♕xf5 18.♕h5† ♕h7 19.♕xg5, and White emerges with an extra pawn.

c) The seemingly paradoxical retreat 13...♗c8! is best. On its original square the bishop is not exposed to attacks as in line 'a', while the white knight has been deprived of the key square e4.

13.♘e4 ♕f7 14.a3 ♗a5 15.♘xa5 ♘xa5 16.h3! ♘e5

Of course not 16...♘f6 17.♘xf6† ♕xf6 18.♕d5† and 19.♕xa5.

When thinking about his twelfth move, Tartakower should have foreseen and evaluated the position we have now arrived at. He should have, but probably he did not.



17.c5! g5

The relatively best defence was 17...♘g6 18.cxd6 ♘xf4 19.gxf4 ♗e6.

18.♗d2 d5

Tartakower himself indicates that 18...♘b3 19.♗c3! ♘xa1 20.cxd6 favours White. Indeed Black would lose quickly after either 20...cxd6 21.♘xd6, or 20...♘d7 21.♗xa1 with the threats of ♘xg5 and ♕d4.

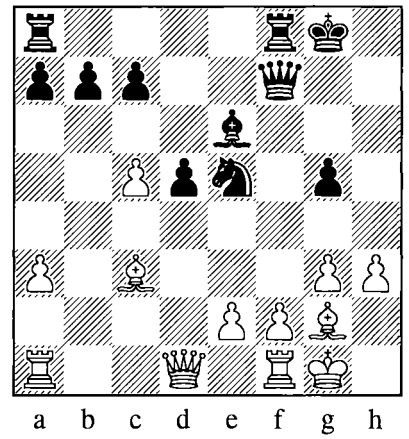
But the continuation Black chooses also meets with a dangerous rejoinder.

19.♘xg5!

The king's position is opened up. Preoccupied as he is in any case with the unsatisfactory state of his forces which are strewn about the board, Black cannot resist for long.

19...hxg5 20.♗xa5 ♗e6 21.♗c3

The fateful dark-square diagonal a1-h8 now represents the essence of the position.



21...♘c6 22.♕d2 ♕f5 23.g4 ♕f4 24.♗xd5! ♗xd5 25.♕xd5† ♔h7

Of course, 25...♖f7 26.e3 ♕f3 27.♕xg5† would also lead swiftly to Black's ruin.

26.e3 ♕f3 27.♕xg5 ♕xh3 28.♕g7#

Black played negligently on his 12th move. This was sufficient to lead him to be mated on move 28.

It happened because he had made a mistake in the "first element" of his thinking, by failing to understand that the strength of the white knight on e4 would make the misplacement of his bishop on b4 critical. If Tartakower had interpreted the positions after move 12 correctly, he would undoubtedly have looked into the variations we indicated in the notes to that move.

From this we may conclude that disregarding or misinterpreting the spirit of the position will corrupt the "second element" of your thought. Playing at variance with the spirit of the position means going down the wrong logical path.

But then the "third element" is also involved here, in your assessment of the position at the end of a mistaken variation. Immersing yourself in this task of assessment – in other words, taking quite a penetrating look into the future – you may come to realize the error in

the *first* element of your thinking, in time to correct it.

This of course presupposes that you perceive your opponent's strong replies in the variation you are examining. At Black's 12th move, if by working out the continuation, Tartakower had anticipated White's 17.c5, he would have rejected 12...h6. From this, some very important conclusions follow; the principal one is that the spirit of the position (the first element of thought) and a variation (the second element) keep checks on each other, and that the variation has primacy in this mutual process of checking.

Where the sense of the position is more or less clear, the mind easily finds the moves and variations that flow from it. On the other hand when difficulties present themselves in ascertaining the main point of the position, and a period of doubts and hesitations begins, variations should come to the aid of your thinking. In these cases, a variation adds new and potentially decisive material to your assessment of the position on the board – your search for its "gist". That is to say that in a player's deliberations, what we have called the second "element of thought" should sometimes occupy a position prior to the first element.

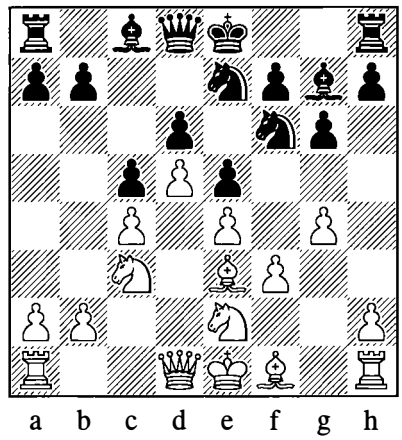
We will look at one more game to conclude. This time we shall try to give the annotations a didactic character that will in a certain measure sum up all that has been said.

M. Taimanov – A. Bannik

King's Indian Defence
25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958

1.c4 ♘f6 2.d4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 e5 6.♘ge2 ♘c6 7.d5 ♘e7 8.♗e3 c5 9.g4

Aiming to open the g-file after his opponent's ...f5; without that move, Black is starved of air in the "King's Indian middlegame".



9...h5

Such tactical thrusts of a "localized" character, amounting to an intermediate episode, are perhaps admissible, but only if they yield a result that is positive however slight, and if they do not go against the spirit of the position.

As we already observed in the previous note, Black's chief task in this situation is to oppose White's c4-d5-e4 pawn wedge by playing ...f5. This is the very essence of the position we are examining. To refrain from playing ...f5, and from playing it quickly, means failing to understand the spirit of the position; it means assenting without a struggle to White's dominance in the centre and also on the queenside, where the possibility of an offensive (b2-b4) is available to him. Not grasping all this, Black has plumped for some obscure variations in which he lacks any bearings; as a result he quite quickly starts slipping downhill.

And yet if Black had absorbed the rationale of the situation after the opening, his line of play would be clear and would probably go as follows: 9...0–0 10.♘g3 ♘e8! 11.♖g1 f5 12.gxf5 gxf5 13.♘h5 f4 14.♗f2 ♘g6. Then although Black is cramped, he has prospects of working up active play on the queenside with ...b5. White's scope, notwithstanding the open g-file, is not particularly great either.

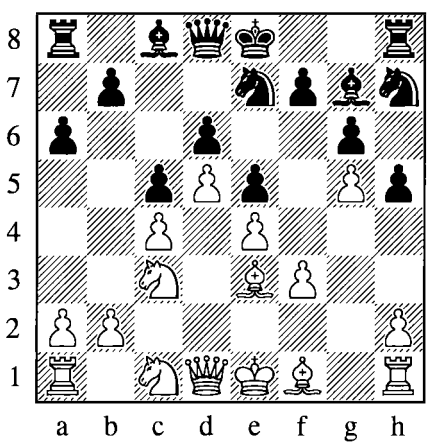
10.g5 ♘h7 11.♘c1 a6

As was to be expected, Black starts switching from one idea to another and cannot devise a serviceable plan. To do so would indeed be difficult.

There is no point at this stage in playing 11...f6. After either 12.h4 or 12.gxf6, opening a line of attack against g6, White would obtain a position with a kingside initiative on top of everything else.

Black's last move is not bad, however; its positive side is that it takes control of the b5-square and eliminates a possible threat of ♘b5. Actually, as we shall presently see, Black has played ...a6 as preparation for ...b5, which is an impractical undertaking. That too of course was a misjudgement of the spirit of the position.

Black needs to resort to some complex manoeuvres in order to be fully equipped to meet White's attack with b2-b4. If White follows that move with a2-a4, Black has to be prepared to react with ...a5; then as an answer to b4xc5, he needs to have not only ...bxc5 but also ...dxc5(!) in readiness. Finally, by way of a blow on the other wing, he has to prepare ...f6. Specifically, these manoeuvres could take the form of ...♗d7, ...♘c8, ...b6, ...♗f8 and ...♗e7.



12.♕d2 ♖b8

A move for any eventuality; after ...b6, the pawn on b6 may need protecting.

13.♖b1!

White has correctly understood the spirit of the position, and undertakes a swift and energetic queenside attack against which Black is defenceless. If anything could be of help to Black here, it could only be a resolute kingside counteroffensive after 13...0–0 and ...f6. Instead of this, he makes a hopeless attempt to stem the onslaught of White's superior forces on the queenside.

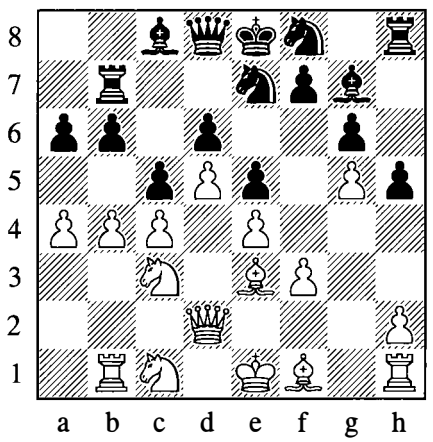
The "first element" of Black's thinking, in this game at any rate, was in total disarray. This was the source of all the misfortune that descends on him here.

13...b6 14.b4 ♖b7

Obviously played to defend against 15.bxc5. The same purpose could be served by 14...♗d7, but this would not greatly alter matters.

15.a4 ♘f8

After 15...a5 16.bxa5 bxa5, the pawn on a5 would be doomed.



Black endeavours to bring his king's knight across to the queenside. At the moment of course he is not concerned with the spirit of

the position, as he is largely subjected to the will of his opponent who has grasped the initiative.

16.a5!

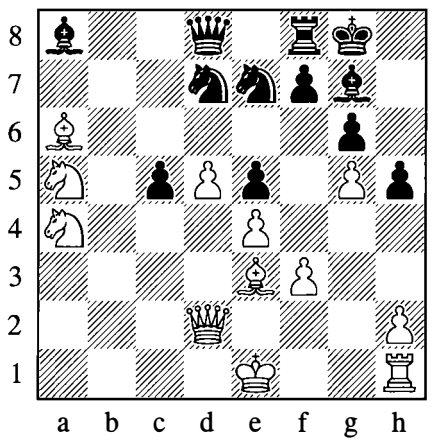
Of course a violent, determined attack on the point c5 is in progress. For this purpose, one of its supports – the b6-pawn – is eliminated.

White's thinking at this stage is fully occupied with variations. All he has to do is calculate them more or less precisely, which is not especially difficult.

16...cxb4 17.♖xb4 bxa5 18.♖xb7 ♗xb7 19.c5 dxc5 20.♘b3 ♘d7 21.♘a4 0–0 22.♘xa5

White's four minor pieces, together with his queen, are literally ravaging his opponent's queenside. This phase of the game creates a powerful impression.

22...♗a8 23.♗xa6



23...f5

This move, in the situation after White's 9.g4, was as essential to Black as air, but right now it does nothing but increase his woes – and it is impossible to see any purpose in it. The opening of the f-file gives Black precisely nothing – this is very easy to see. The undermining of White's powerful pawn wedge is impossible, and should not even fall within Black's field of vision.

Taimanov's reaction to this move in his notes is curious. He writes: "The saying 'better late than never' is inapplicable to the present case. Black has played ...f5 about twelve moves too late, and now this counter-chance doesn't achieve its purpose." Those are Taimanov's words, but let us once again ask what "purpose" he can be speaking of here, and what precisely can have made Black decide on this pawn push. The negative role of the move, on the other hand, plainly stands out. Dangerous "holes" appear on e6 and g6, and furthermore there is a direct route to e6 for the white knights.

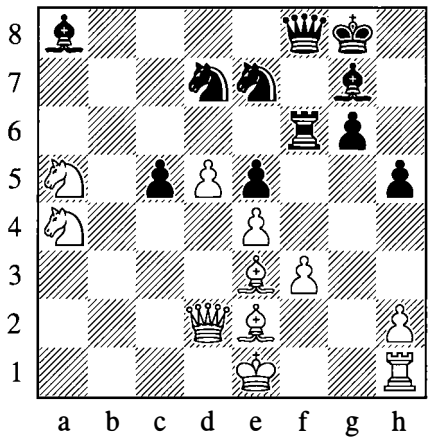
This kind of lunge is apt to be explained by critics and annotators, and sometimes by the player himself, on grounds of desperation and so forth. This explanation may serve as further testimony to that slovenliness of thought to which players are often prone during a game, and of which we already spoke at the start of this chapter. Or again, moves that are clearly bad are explained on the grounds that "everything is as bad as everything else." This is not a serious comment. When reduced to a state of "damned if you do, damned if you don't", you should simply terminate the game.

Even now Black had the move 23...♕b8 available, which would undoubtedly have been better than 23...f5.

24.gxf6 ♖xf6 25.♗e2

That's that! The f-file is rendered harmless, White's pawn wedge is unshakable. Black's whole position, with his two blocked bishops, presents a picture of utter impotence. In general terms, if you compare the roles played in this game by the two sides' minor pieces (the lifeblood of the attack!), comment becomes superfluous.

25...♕f8



26.0–0

It is just here – in contrast to the commentary on 23...f5 – that it would be perfectly apt to say "better late than never."

26...♘c8 27.♘b3

A knight is heading for e6 and cannot be stopped.

27...c4 28.♘bc5 ♘xc5 29.♘xc5 ♕e8 30.♖a1 ♘d6 31.♘e6 ♗b7 32.♕b4 ♗f8 33.♗c5 ♖xe6

Otherwise there is no saving the piece. If 33...♕d7, then 34.♖a7.

34.dxe6 ♕c6 35.♖c1

Black could resign here, but continued playing until the 44th move.

...1–0

We would now just like to draw attention to the following.

After playing 9...h5, Bannik began to lose confidence; his thoughts ran counter to logic and finally became scrappy. Meanwhile, Taimanov's thinking was distinguished by orderliness, logic and clarity. This is to be explained not by the personal qualities of the opponents, but by the character of the struggle. Throughout the whole game the initiative belonged to Taimanov, and he was free to undertake what he wanted, whereas Bannik's freedom of action was more or less subjugated by his opponent's constant threats and attacks. The thinking of the player faced with his opponent's initiative or attack often loses its balance, its system and logicality. This explains why roughly 80 per cent of all oversights, miscalculations and blunders are made by the defending side. As long as his opponent has the initiative, particularly a lasting one, the defender is under the crushing burden of the threat of loss; this weakens his mental discipline and prevents him from meeting and surmounting his difficulties with the necessary sang-froid.

In conclusion let us sum up all that has been said about the thinking of a chess player during the process of a game: a variation arises out of the position, a position arises from the variation, and this interdependence needs to be understood in its true logical meaning.

Self-disciplined thinking!

Here is the motto we place together with that of "Seek the initiative!" which we proclaimed in Part One of this book. It is not hard to see how organically the two mottoes are interrelated.

Index of Names

A

Aagaard 3
Achilles 194
Adams 254, 339
Alapin 96, 97, 216, 217
Alatortsev 91, 140, 368
Albin 197, 198
Alekhine 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32, 44, 46, 47, 48, 51, 79, 81, 82, 86, 103, 112, 114, 132, 133, 135, 136, 151, 161, 177, 182, 186, 194, 195, 196, 197, 202, 205, 207, 213, 214, 221, 224, 242, 245, 305, 324, 325, 339, 356, 375, 376, 378, 392, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406
Anderssen 63, 237, 239, 240, 241, 242, 267, 268, 270, 271, 273, 300, 350, 380
Antoshin 28
Aronin 155
Asztalos 313, 314, 316, 317, 319, 356
Averbakh 201, 238

B

Bannik 409, 412
Barbier 227
Bauer 281, 282
Bernstein 67, 69, 232, 233, 236, 238, 253, 283, 353, 363
Berry 352
Bilguer 267
Billecard 100
Bird 155, 239, 244, 284, 352
Blackburne 123, 197, 198, 239, 243, 254, 277, 278, 279, 280, 336, 375
Bogoljubow 19, 114, 142, 182, 186, 213, 214, 305, 385
Boleslavsky 148, 203, 205, 364, 368
Bondarevsky 15, 237, 238, 330, 331, 358, 359
Botvinnik 15, 16, 21, 40, 41, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 110, 117, 119, 121, 130, 136, 147, 199, 201, 205, 206, 221, 303, 307, 309, 364
Breyer 161, 162
Bronstein 40, 41, 300, 309, 327, 330, 332, 392, 398
Burn 187, 216, 218, 244, 281, 293, 294

C

Capablanca 44, 46, 85, 86, 105, 110, 142, 169, 174, 205, 212, 215, 232, 233, 236, 238, 253, 263, 283, 293, 294, 295, 306, 342, 343, 367, 375, 394, 395, 396, 397
Charousek 96, 98
Chigorin 18, 42, 52, 53, 56, 57, 59, 62, 72, 100, 103, 121, 124, 156, 166, 169, 191, 193, 197, 210, 212, 219, 221, 242, 243, 260, 268, 269, 270, 284, 302, 340, 344, 352, 363, 366, 391
Cohn 149
Colle 245

D

Daniuszewski 87, 89
Dubinin 38, 296
Dufresne 271, 281
Duras 127, 128, 345, 348, 350, 351, 364, 368
Dus-Chotimirsky 114, 125, 294, 376

E

Eliskases 151
Euwe 29, 112, 135, 136, 177, 182, 224, 267, 299, 376
Evenson 79, 80
Evtifeev 87, 89

F

Filip 400, 401
Fine 182
Flohr 155, 166, 215, 325
Forgacs 67, 353, 392, 393, 394, 402
Freiman 377
Fridstein 225

G

Geller 63, 111, 164
Goglidze 325
Göring 273, 274, 276
Gothilf 32
Greco 234, 250
Grekov 267
Grigoriev 303
Grünfeld 114, 116
Gunsberg 52, 54, 59, 229
Gurgenidze 328

H

Halprin 157
Hampe 242, 275
Hübner 269

I

Ilyin-Zhenevsky 382
Izmailov 37

J

Janowski 169, 212, 213, 225, 244, 261, 263, 301, 302, 381, 394, 395, 396
John 54

K

Kan 143, 383
Kashdan 215
Kasparian 37, 163, 165, 166
Kasparov 25, 65, 172, 173, 192, 193, 269, 272, 289
Keres 330, 398, 399
Khasin 203, 204
Kholmov 49
Kieseritzky 237, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 380
Kirillov 101, 103
Klaman 11, 13
Kmoch 132, 135
Knorre 366
Kolisch 240, 363
Korchnoi 102, 242
Kotov 148, 215, 237, 238, 308, 358
Koyalovich 388
Kubbel 382
Kugenek 247
Kupchik 355

L

Labourdonnais 302, 307
Lasker 18, 46, 47, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 72, 84, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 179, 187, 188, 189, 191, 193, 210, 211, 212, 221, 228, 231, 242, 253, 254, 265, 267, 281, 282, 283, 284, 287, 288, 290, 301, 342, 347, 354, 355, 363, 387
Lehmann 257, 258
Leonhardt 374
Lerner 63
Levenfish 38, 103, 110, 114, 119, 140, 143, 163, 182, 192, 296, 376, 383
Levitsky 370
Lilienthal 105
Lisitsin 103, 105
Livshin 49
Loyd 240, 363

M

Mackenzie 239, 243
Makogonov 139
Marco 67, 83, 84
Maroczy 22, 23, 98, 150, 261, 262, 263, 264, 340, 341, 369

Marshall 142, 154, 261, 264, 303, 309, 335, 340, 342, 355, 356, 369
Mason 239, 275
Mayet 272
McDonnell 302
Meitner 242, 275
Miasoedov 206
Mieses 100, 101, 225, 365, 380, 381, 387
Mikenas 47
Minckwitz 273, 274
Molina 245
Mongredien 253, 271, 272
Morphy 19, 103, 253, 271, 301, 351, 352
Müller 83

N

Najdorf 299
Nimzowitsch 19, 138, 139, 261, 264, 283, 284, 313, 314, 315, 317, 318, 319, 343, 367, 374
Noah 373
Nolmann 324
Novotelnov 257

O

Odessky 3
Olland 364, 365

P

Panov 337, 358, 397
Paulsen 243, 267, 351, 352
Pavlov 256
Perlis 304, 305
Petrosian 201
Philidor 267
Pillsbury 18, 42, 43, 95, 96, 97, 98, 150, 157, 174, 175, 176, 223, 224, 229, 230, 242, 254, 287, 289, 321, 324, 352
Pilnik 366
Pollock 276, 284
Polugaevsky 147

R

Rabinovich 110, 377
Ragozin 308
Ratner 406
Rauzer 313
Ravinsky 122, 337
Reggio 380, 387
Reti 27, 125, 230, 267, 378, 385
Riemann 241
Romanovsky 3, 26, 32, 43, 71, 81, 122, 125, 178, 199, 206, 212, 247, 256, 388
Rotlewi 333, 335
Rovner 257
Rubinstein 36, 44, 125, 127, 128, 151, 152, 153, 154, 221, 263, 297, 298, 310, 333, 406, 407
Rudakovsky 35, 406

S

Saavedra 227
Sakharov 370
Salwe 189, 251, 260, 261, 264
Savitsky 296
Schallopp 240, 241, 381, 382
Schiffers 98, 99, 166, 234
Schlechter 95, 96, 98, 170, 171, 172, 174, 175, 179, 244, 245, 249, 250, 263, 304, 305, 387
Schmidt 52
Shaw 3
Showalter 84, 123
Simagin 111
Smirnov 228
Smorodsky 43
Smyslov 11, 21, 35, 117, 139, 147, 201, 221, 225, 295, 299, 300, 307
Sokolsky 121, 356
Spassky 148, 221, 242
Spielmann 128, 149, 306, 317, 318, 320, 368
Stahlberg 19, 178, 179, 180, 181, 205, 206, 299

Starchenkov 26
Staunton 19, 267
Steinitz 4, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 71, 72, 108, 123, 192, 209, 212, 221, 270, 271, 272, 273, 276, 277, 281, 282, 285, 286, 287, 337, 340, 344, 352, 391
Stepanov 206
Sterk 303
Stoltz 366
Süchting 54
Suetin 28, 147
Sugden 3
Swiderski 96
Szabo 400, 401
Szen 267
Szily 327

T

Taimanov 102, 116, 409, 411, 412
Tal 148, 221, 242, 257, 258, 328
Tarrasch 19, 46, 47, 56, 67, 95, 96, 98, 110, 114, 115, 121, 122, 125, 160, 166, 169, 212, 223, 224, 253, 254, 276, 281, 283, 284, 309, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406
Tartakower 51, 138, 187, 306, 310, 392, 393, 402, 406, 408, 409
Teichmann 67, 68, 151, 297, 345, 348, 350, 351, 354, 355
Terpugov 41
Tolush 356, 357
Torre 254, 265, 339, 363
Treybal 85
Troitsky 230, 300

V

Vajda 166
Vidmar 160, 251
Vilner 71, 72, 75, 81
Volkenshtein 228
Von Bardeleben 124, 285, 286, 287, 337, 352
Von der Lasa 267

W

Williams 267
Winawer 243, 275, 276, 277
Wolf 67, 249, 250, 321, 322, 323, 335
Wyvill 267

Y

Yates 27, 194, 195, 202, 339
Yudovich 13, 91

Z

Zagoriansky 130
Zhukhovitsky 116
Znosko-Borovsky 297
Zubarev 36
Zukertort 155, 156, 221, 239, 242, 243, 272, 273, 277, 278, 280, 281

Soviet Middlegame Technique

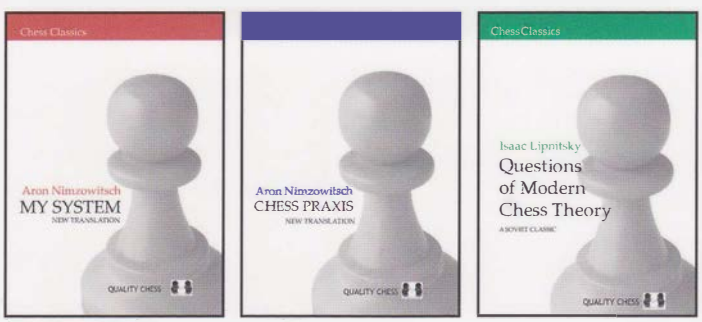
by Peter Romanovsky

Many of the classics of Soviet chess literature have struggled to see the light of day, but none more so than **Soviet Middlegame Technique** by Peter Romanovsky. The original version of this famous guide to the middlegame was published in 1929 when Romanovsky was Soviet Champion. Romanovsky later decided to update and improve his work. As he finished his work in 1942, World War II was underway and Romanovsky was trapped in the notorious siege of Leningrad. The author barely survived and his manuscript was lost.

Romanovsky was undeterred and finally recreated his improved book in 1960. His writing was later translated into English and published in two titles – one on Planning and the other on Combinations. In this fresh translation we have included both works to create the ultimate version of a classic of Soviet chess literature.

GM Alexander Kotov on Romanovsky:
"One of the finest books in chess literature."

Also available



QUALITY CHESS
www.qualitychess.co.uk

€23.99 $29.95
ISBN 978-1-907982-48-4
52995
9 781907 982484